

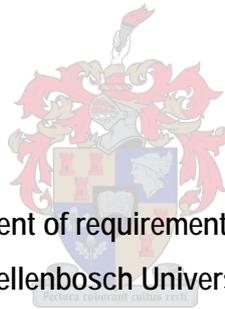
Interracial Rape and the Appropriation of the 'White Mask':

A psychoanalytical reading of Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*.

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By

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Date: 02 March 2009

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## Abstract:

This thesis argues that Ndi Sibiyi, fictional writer and protagonist of the novel, *Mating Birds* by Lewis Nkosi develops a pathological obsession with Veronica Slater, a white woman for whose rape Sibiyi is about to be executed. One of the many theorists that have commented on the effects of race on sexuality, particularly in colonized black people is Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon asks a question based on Freud's question, "What does a woman want?" Fanon's question is different in that he asks, what do black people want, which opens the way for a post-colonial psychoanalytical analysis of Ndi Sibiyi. What he is concerned with in *Black Skin White Masks* is a post-colonial psycho-analytical evaluation of the state of being black in colonial societies. Nkosi does the same in his novel, whereas he deals with Apartheid South Africa as an extension of colonialism. Nkosi and Fanon are both addressing the broader psychological impact racially oppressive societies have on the black person's psyche. Fanon in his psychoanalytical study of the black man from within the Freudian framework aims to save the man of colour from himself (9) by giving black people a warning that is not much different from the warning Sibiyi's father gives to him: do not lust after the white man's woman.

## Opsomming:

Dit is hierdie tesis se argument dat Ndi Sibiyi (die fiktiewe skrywer en protagonis van die iese novelle, *Mating Birds* deur Lewis Nkosi) n patologiese obsessie met Veronica Slater ontwikkel. Veronica is 'n wit vrou oor wie se verkragting Sibiyi gehang gaan word. Een van die talle teoretici wie al kommentaar gelewer het oor die effek van ras op seksualiteit, veral in gekoloniseerde swart mense, is Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skin White Masks* vra Fanon 'n vraag wat hy baseer op Freud se vraag, "Wat wil vroue hê?". Fanon se vraag is ietwat anders deurdat hy vra, "Wat will swart mense hê?". Hierdie vraag maak dit moontlik om 'n post-koloniale psigoanalitiese beskouing van Ndi Sibiyi te ontwikkel. In *Black Skin White Masks* fokus Fanon op 'n post-koloniale psigoanalitiese evaluering oor hoe dit is om swart te wees in 'n koloniale samelewing. Nkosi en Fanon is albei besig om die breër sielkundige impak van rassistiese state op die swart mens se psige te ondersoek. Fanon, in sy Freudiaanse psigoanalitiese studie van die swart man beoog hy om die man van kleur van homself te red (9) deur swart mense 'n waarskuwing te gee wat baie dieselfde is as die waarskuwing wat Sibiyi se pa vir hom gee: moet nooit 'n wit man se vrou begeer nie.

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## Chapter one:

### Introduction

*Mating Birds* is a novel by Lewis Nkosi and is in the form of a memoir. The book highlights the highly oppressive ways in which Apartheid South Africa functioned. Lewis Nkosi is one of a group of people generally referred to as the *Drum* writers; authors, critics and journalists who at some time of their career worked for *Drum* magazine. In post-Apartheid South Africa, during Apartheid and in colonial times, it was viewed as important that those select few black people who are lucky enough to gain access to western education use their knowledge to further the struggle for the liberation of all black people. Thus many black authors felt the need to document the experience of being black in a space in which being white was constructed as being dominant and superior. Though theorists like Jean-Paul Sartre may laud the oppressed black person's literary ability many South African theorists, including Lewis Nkosi, suggest that there seems to have been a stagnation in Black South African English writing due to the fact that the black writer was preoccupied with the desperate need to document how cruel colonialism and Apartheid was. As such one finds that there are few literary pieces written by black South Africans, at the time, that do not deal with the subject of Apartheid.

Nkosi's *Mating Birds* was first published in 1982 and reflects the functioning of the Apartheid system through his protagonist Ndi Sibiya. Sibiya is throughout *Mating Birds* the fictional writer and "first-person narrator operat[ing] from a retrospective perspective on the past" (Starck-Adler 2006, 98). He is a young black South African man in prison, awaiting his execution for the rape of Veronica Slater, a white South African woman. Throughout the memoir Sibiya maintains that he is innocent, and in an attempt to find clarity and document his version of the "truth," he writes down the events that lead up to him being imprisoned. Dr. Emile Dufré, a Swiss-German psychoanalyst who plays a very important role in Sibiya's accessing and documenting of his fragmented and disjointed memories, encourages him to do so as part of his own psychoanalytical reading of Sibiya. The questions that Dr. Dufré poses to Sibiya in his attempt to arrive at a psychoanalytic conclusion that would explain Sibiya's obsession with white women to the white western scientific world is what drives the novel as well as determines its structure. Because of *Mating Birds'* narrative structure, the reader perceives the events that surround the "supposed" rape of Veronica from Sibiya's perspective alone which is effectively the view of the "rapist" and colonial other. This problematizes the narrative making it difficult for the reader to determine the 'truth'. Whether or not Sibiya does in fact rape Veronica, or if he is the innocent victim of a white temptress' exploration of the other, is a question that remains unanswered even after close analysis.

According to Nkosi, as expressed in the preface to the 2004 Kwela Books edition of *Mating Birds*, this inability of the reader to arrive at a solid and valid conclusion about the rape is a direct consequence of the sheer unnaturalness of the Apartheid state. This is coupled with how Apartheid as a socio-economic and political state is so pathological in itself that it cannot but produce pathological citizens and social situation and interactions.

To say that to the very end there are no social relations to speak of between Ndi Sibiyá and Veronica Slater is precisely to confirm what the novel set out to show. (Nkosi 2004, 6)

The reason we never know whether the coupling between Ndi and Veronica was rape or the consummation of mutual desire is precisely because Ndi could never openly ask Veronica, in which case she could have either given her assent or *speak* her refusal in the normal way these things are done in a normal community. (Nkosi 2004, 6)

In this case, the immense power that race and race relations have on the average South African reader and critic's perception of the reality that is presented by Sibiyá complicates the issue and has often been the cause of controversy that has surrounded the novel.

Nkosi, who worked for many years as a literary critic and reviewer, is also the author of a number of plays, poetry, short stories and novels. He is also a librettist. Yet, despite his diverse oeuvre, Liz Gunner and Lindy Stiebel note that "Nkosi has attracted some of the sharpest criticism [...] for what a few critics have called his sexism, even racial sexism" (Stiebel and Gunner 2006, xxxii);

Lazarus maintains that it is "undermined by [...] a virulent and structuring sexism". Henry Louis Gates, Jr., while complementing the novel for "confront[ing] boldly and imaginatively the strange interplay of bondage, desire and torture inherent in inter-racial sexual relationships within the South African Prison house of apartheid", nevertheless criticises the black protagonist's slavish sexual obsession, which detracts from any political critique within the novel. For Josephine Dodd, the work "reeks strongly of sweaty old man fantasy masquerading as literary sophistication." (Stiebel and Gunner, xx)

André P. Brink, who has often employed the metaphor of interracial sex in his own literary works, is so offended by the novel that he writes a highly emotional critique of it. According to him, *Mating Birds* is "not [...] Nkosi's first attempt at inserting the skeleton key of an interracial sexual relationship into the well-lubricated lock of the apartheid closet door" (Brink 1992, 1). Though the protagonist is "blaming himself on history", Nkosi fails to adequately deal with the issue of inter-racial sex because his novel lacks the "irony Modisane applied to the endeavour" in his autobiography, *Blame Me on History* (Brink, 2). Brink ignores the obvious fact that Nkosi is trying to highlight the extent to which Apartheid was so insidious that it affects even the most intimate of social interactions, which in this case is the choice of sexual partner. This in turn is linked to a broader discussion of Frantz Fanon's theory as put forward in *Black Skin White Masks* supporting the reading applied in this thesis which suggests that as a black child in Apartheid South Africa and then a young man, Sibiya came to internalise the stereotype of his inferiority and thus as a consequence and through his sexual rebellion with a white woman is essentially trying to reconcile his internal "white self" with his external constructed and projected "black self" .

Lucy Graham argues that, "Brink himself is guilty in his own writing of some of the accusations he levels against Nkosi" (Graham 2006, xx). Instead of the "cheap opportunism" and "half-hearted stab at postmodernism" that Johan Jacobs identifies in the novel (Jacobs 1990, 2-3) there are instead "innovative and transgressive aspects" to it that are not "limited to narrative form" and thus suggest that the novel should instead be viewed as a modernist text (Graham, 152). In defence of her argument she highlights the fact that "Nkosi, along with Arthur Maimane and Dambodza Marechera, was the first among black Southern African authors to write intimately, erotically and explicitly of female flesh" (Graham, 153). They are thus groundbreakers in an area which, judging from Brink's response to it has been proven to be taboo for a black man.

If "[w]estern knowledge, and with it the power of the pen, would corrupt the black subject, [as Sibiya claims it has in his case,] then by such logic a black writer who took up a pen to narrate the intimacies of an encounter with a white woman's body would be steering close to blasphemy" (Graham, 153). In the case of Nkosi, as the writer of a work of fiction that is obsessed with the white female body, he "risks condemnation by the white literary establishment, and possibly also marginalization by the liberation movement in South Africa" (Graham, 153). The white literary establishment and liberation movement of South Africa do not view the topic of inter-racial sex itself as taboo, but it is the instance of a black male writer addressing that subject that is offensive and elicits angry responses such as Brink's. Rather than Nkosi, as a black South African who is obsessed with the miscegenation taboo, instead it is the white

South African male that is obsessed with restricting access to the white female body (on all levels) to himself.

Graham asks how can “one account for the antipathy that South African critics expressed towards *Mating Birds*, and the double standards by which the novel was judged?” (Graham, 159). She quotes Nkosi in an attempt to answer her own question:

For some white critics it was all right for the white male writers to "narrate" on black bodies but for black writers to "narrate" on white bodies was a bit too much even for some "progressive" white critics; when you described a white woman's body too intimately in fiction you were actually "fondling" her body.  
(Nkosi, quoted in Graham, 159)

The laws that made inter-racial sex taboo in Apartheid South Africa also governed the extent to which black male writers at the time were allowed to engage with the white female body.

For Graham the novel "breaks with realism and draws on the avant-garde strategies of European modernism" (Graham, 152) *Mating Birds* can thus be considered “an 'outsider' in the territory to which black South African writing had been relegated" (Graham, 152). Nkosi breaks the mould that he, as black writer, has been stereotyped into by creating a narrative that, instead of rehashing the atrocities of Apartheid in the form of the black subject's auto-biography (as in *Down Second Avenue* by Ezekiel Mphahlele), instead deals with it by highlighting the extent to which a system that is primarily based on racial discrimination corrupts all levels of human interaction, even the sexual.

In Apartheid South Africa, racist white South Africans considered the rape of a white woman a particularly horrific offence hence the constant attempt to limit all forms of interaction between the different races in the country to a minimum, particularly social interaction between black men and white women. This obsession with racial segregation stemmed from the belief that the survival of the white man in Africa, (especially that of the chosen Afrikaner people) depended on the purity of the white race. The racial identities, enforced by law during Apartheid South Africa are directly related to racially discriminative laws that were implemented when the country was still under colonial rule. These laws were often reinforced and justified by the underlying stereotypes that led to their enactment to begin with, and were fuelled by imperial greed.

“The very existence of white settlements in British Colonies in Africa was seen by colonists to depend, in view of the numerical inferiority and defencelessness of the white population, upon the principle that the native mind regarded the white woman as inviolable” (Boateng 2007, 36-37). Aside from highlighting the obvious fact that the numerous black peoples of Africa outnumbered the small number of white colonizers and that this knowledge cause them a strong sense of anxiety, there is also the construction within the white community of the white female as that which cannot and must not be profaned. White women become symbols of racial purity and the dominance of whiteness and thus the idea of racial mixing evoked in racist whites in colonial and Apartheid South Africa a strong sense of “revulsion” (Boateng, 37).

“[O]n 1 July 1949 [the South African government passed], the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act which made it illegal for "Europeans" and "non-Europeans" in South Africa to marry” (Boateng, 37). The enactment of this law was the culmination of a number of legislative attempts to prevent interracial sex of all kinds. In support of the Act, the *Natal Witness* published an editorial:

Miscegenation is contrary to our fundamental beliefs and legislation has recently been introduced for its prohibition...

Mixed marriage strikes at the root of white supremacy. Even if it were limited to exceptional cases, it tends to breed ideas that are antipathetic to our conviction that the colour bar in Africa must be maintained. (Boateng, 37)

Albie Sachs in *Justice in South Africa* writes that although sexual intercourse between persons of a different colour in colonial and Apartheid South Africa was prohibited by law, pre-Union prosecutions of these cases seem to have been rare and immediately after Union official attention was directed more at unwilling interracial sexual intercourse rather than at willing sex (Sachs 1973, 174). This evidence supports the conclusion that inter-racial sex, where a black man and a white woman are involved, was not a common occurrence, yet it would appear the opposite was one of the fundamental tenets of racism adhered to by whites in racist societies. This seems to be because of the 'space' white men constructed themselves into inhabiting, reserving sexual interactions with white women, solely as their right.

The term ‘Black Peril’ has a long history in the South African context and was used generally to refer to the constant threat black men were perceived to pose to white women. Even though miscegenation had often been put forward as the primary reason for the need to keep the races separate, research done for

this thesis suggests that it was not miscegenation itself that the racist white colonizer loathed, but instead the defilement of that which he had constructed as the mother of the white nation; the source of racial purity.

In his campaigns for Prime Minister in the late 1920's General Barry Hertzog, founder of the Afrikaner National Party of South Africa, linked the threat of black "Bolshevism" with permanent African urbanization and detribalization (Worden 1994, 87), using the stereotype of 'black peril' to further his party's stance on segregation.

The 'Black Peril' slogan tapped into a strong underlying current of white supremacism, which had certainly not diminished since the late nineteenth century. For instance, opposition to miscegenation and fears of white 'degeneration' in un-segregated cities were widely held notions. Together with this came the belief that Africans were innately incapable of becoming fully incorporated members of 'civilized' society. (Worden, 87)

The racist white South African's mental construct of black South African identity is very complex and multi-faceted. The black person is represented as being unable to fully escape his/her 'savage', 'primitive' or 'backward' nature and engage with white society in an equal, civilized, modern manner. The white racist South African construct of black South African identity represents black people as being responsible for their own state of subjugation. They are thus seen as unable to escape their black nature, symbolised by their black skin and reinforced by the negative association blackness has in language, and are thus not capable of becoming actualized citizens, even if white South Africans allowed them to do so.

As Ernest Cole notes in *House of Bondage*:

White South Africans can tell you, of course, how they would feel if someone put them in the underdog position in which they have frozen the Africans. But they cannot believe the Africans are capable of such feelings. "Man, don't feel sorry for them," you are always told. "They're happier than you and I. They only live for the moment." (1967, 10)

This view forms the basis of the idea that black people should be allowed, through Apartheid and separate development, to develop on their own until they have reached the same level of development as Europeans.

Racist stereotyping also connects Black inferiority and white superiority directly to the genetic makeup of the races. Miscegenation between the white race and the black race is seen as a pollution of the purity of white blood, thus inevitably leading to the deterioration of white society and culture, which in turn would eventually lead to the fall of the western world. This was, however only the case if a black man had unwilling or willing sex with white woman, a white man who had willing or unwilling interracial sex with black women was not perceived as causing a perversion of the white race, but rather to cause the amelioration of the black race. Robert Young is of the opinion that “commentators have often suggested that there must be a deep connection between sexuality and racism” and that “[t]he links between sex and race were developed in the nineteenth century through fantasies derived from cultural stereotypes in which blackness evokes an attractive, but dangerous, sexuality, an apparently abundant, limitless, but threatening fertility” (96).

It is thus important for an analysis of a text that deals with the rape of a white woman by a black man to look at the impact their skin colour and subsequent constructed identities have on the way in which the rape is 'processed' by the racist society in which it happens. In *Mating Birds* it is entirely because of their constructed identities as white Madam and black boy that the 'rape' of Veronica takes place and Sibiya is sentenced to death. And, for his part, Sibiya is represented as obsessed with accessing that which he views as being most valuable to the South African white male at the time in which the novel is set. As will be shown, when he discovers Veronica, he becomes consumed with a strong sense of rage and sexual excitement which results in him fixating on her as the means through which he will be able to live out his sexual and political rebellion. Sibiya is conscious of the fact that the act of interracial sex in Apartheid South Africa cannot but be political and that his subjugation as a black man has led to his obsession with white women. This in turn is read as stemming from his need to be accepted into the white space, a space that has been constructed as a place of power and sexual dominance. Through this act he is also able to, metaphorically, have sex with Nonkanyezi, his mother as well as the first white girl he sees when he is a child.

Apartheid was designed in such a way as to exclude black people – black men in particular – from white spaces. This is evident in both the novel, *Mating Birds*, and in real life Apartheid South Africa in the way in which specific areas was restricted for the sole use of whites by law. Though the need for these social-racial borders stems from the anxiety of miscegenation that underlies the restriction of the black man to the black space, there is another anxiety that relates directly to the idea of white people tainted

by direct, or even indirect, physical contact with black people. This was the nature of the encounter between white and black people in South African society, and the fear of contamination: white people reacted negatively to sharing swimming pools, public toilets, beaches and simple household utensils like cups and saucers with black people.

According to Cole, most white employers who employed black people in their households went way beyond the idea of separate housing and imposed what he calls “kitchen *apartheid*.” An example of this is how these employers would insist “that their servants eat separate food from separate utensils” (72). It was important to them that

Everything must be segregated: enamel plates, spoons, drinking mugs, even the “black pot” in which the dinner is prepared. An African cook can prepare the white family’s food, lay the table, taste each dish beforehand to see if it is ready, and then serve it. But then she is supposed to disassociate herself from the “master’s food” and the “master’s plate,” as though she had never had anything to do with them. (Cole, 72)

These views suggest that white people in Apartheid South Africa thought of race as fluid: blackness is perceived to be able to come off black people and attach itself to whites. By allowing the black person to imagine himself as being able to “enter” the white space, whatever form this space may take, one is undermining the position of the white man and, even more dangerously, would instil in the black person’s consciousness the idea that he is in effect not inferior. This in turn would lead to the undermining of the racist social structure and possibly lead to rebellion. Further, a black man in Apartheid South Africa who has sexual intercourse with a white woman is seen as contaminating both the white man’s ‘property’ and the white man himself, who is in danger of becoming contaminated by his blackness.

In *Mating Birds* after moving from the rural pastoral environment of his early childhood to the more ‘urban’ surroundings of the squatter camp, as well as through his education, Sibiyi develops a strong political awareness and starts wanting access to the white socio-political space symbolized by white women. Having already attained a white western education and thus world-view, and because of the impossibility of changing his skin colour, he becomes aware of the fact that the only means that he as a black man living in Apartheid South Africa has of feeling equal to a white man would be by having sexual relations with a white woman. Because colonial and Apartheid South Africa constructed white

women as the ultimate sex objects and mothers of white nationhood, both white and black people in Sibiyá's memoir believe them to be highly desirable to black men and thus one gets the sense that Sibiyá is doomed from the start to succumb to his passions.

Also in the preface to *Mating Birds* Nkosi comments that he wanted to tell "the story of an obsession in which the sea, the sun and bodies on the beach combine to form an image" (5). Nkosi confesses that he is "obsessed with the idea of a fateful obsession in which even the weather plays its part; how for example a ray of sunlight striking the eye's retina can produce unforeseen results, provoke a murder, cause a suicide, set loose unbounded passions" (5). To him the scene that best illustrates this obsession is where Veronica and Sibiyá are "on their knees in a beachfront tobacco shop, in defiance of Apartheid, scrambling to gather up the scattered contents of her handbag", "their eyes fixed on each other's in an accumulated desire sickened by interaction" (5-6). Nkosi highlights the processes that lead to the sickening of this kind of interaction between white and black people as being the cause of Sibiyá's obsession, reiterating the view that Apartheid South Africa was so unnatural in how it organised social interaction and identities that tend to be pathological.

First and foremost, it was Nkosi's purpose to "write about the gaze, about the pleasures and risks of looking and being looked at and the complicity between the subject and the object of that gaze" (6). The first person narrator always raises issues of the gaze because of the subjective nature of the experience. By choosing to have his narrator as black, male and heterosexual, Nkosi is able, through the use of the gaze and silence, to present Sibiyá as being in a space of dominance when he interacts with Veronica. In addition, we, as readers, know that "the most significant feature" of the "relationship" that develops between Sibiyá and Veronica or "between the seductive [white] woman and the obsessed Black man is that it is conducted entirely in *silence*" (Ashcroft et al 2005, 85). In the moment of discovering Veronica, Sibiyá "surrender[s] his own world of speech and enters the world of non-verbal signs" (Ashcroft et al, 85). This shift in Sibiyá's approach to communication serves as a reminder of the extent to which he has been alienated from his own African society which is innately oral. After his discovery of Veronica, Sibiyá's only means of expression is through the formalized processes of the court, Dr. Dufre's psychoanalytical sessions and the writing of his memoir: all things determined by cultural and social norms the white man had laid down.

Although the communication between Veronica and Sibiyá happens in an entirely "non-verbal" way by means of subtle looks and expressions, the 'lovers' are both so skilled in non-verbal communication that

they are able, without touching each other or speaking a word, to stimulate each other to the point of climax, each lying on their “racially correct” side of the beach. The way in which the ‘relationship’ is grounded in “silence is crucial to the metaphoric architecture of the story”, since it helps Nkosi to develop a narrative that is entirely constructed out of the observations of a marginalized, oppressed, black male (Ashcroft et al, 85). Because the ‘relationship’ “occurs in a space committed neither to speech nor writing” there is no way that Sibiya is able to prove that he did not rape Veronica (Ashcroft et al, 86). When he and Veronica are forced by Apartheid laws to enter a space of silence, Sibiya is deluded “into a vision of dominance” (Ashcroft et al, 86). They are able to escape the dichotomy of white madam, black boy and enter one of male and female in which the man (following patriarchal convention) would be in the position of power. By not speaking, Veronica and Sibiya successfully circumvent the complexity the utterance of a single word would have added to their escapades. All words that pass between the coloniser and the colonised are loaded and skewed in their representation of power, and thus immediately place the oppressed in the position of being oppressed and the oppressor in the position of being oppressive, respectively.

Though the two never speak to each other aside from the day they bump into each other at the entrance to the tobacco store, Veronica uses her vocal chords in an attempt to communicate twice, once when she testifies in court and again during the actual “rape”, when she screams and fights against Sibiya. On both occasions, what she vocalizes dooms Sibiya to death. This, according to this thesis, contributes to the construction of Veronica as a willing seductress who changes her mind in the midst of having sex with a black man, and then consciously lies in an attempt to protect herself (as well as indirectly kill the man who is to hang because of her testimony), highlighting the extent to which Veronica’s use of language, when weighed against Sibiya’s, is proven to be more powerful. This representation brings to mind Sibiya’s perception of the young white girl who was in Van Niekerk’s class with him whilst at University, the one with the “green eyes and sexy loose mouth” whose question in class should have made Sibiya realize that “white women will always cause trouble on race questions” (83). Then too, he presents sex between the white black man and the white woman as being, innately, a political act.

The power of the written word is shown when Sibiya’s memoir affords him the opportunity to present, even though not in oral form, his version of the truth without it being directly refuted or questioned as in court. Because he sees writing as a character-forming endeavour and derives great satisfaction from it he writes all the time (26), “[t]he thought of death, the horror of departing from this world before [his] time is served [...] puts zeal into [his] pen”, motivating him to finish his memoir and get his first literary

work 'out there' (26). Sibiyi wants to posit his version of the events surrounding the rape and the forming of his character, in an attempt to present a different truth to the one that has been "officialized" or entered into the public records by the rape trial which had received quite a lot of media coverage (26). To him writing is a political act, and thus his memoir, like sexual intercourse with white Veronica, is restricted to the political sphere.

Sibiyi's understanding of the power of the pen is directly related to his mother's and to some extent his own, understanding of the power of accessing a western education. To her, and many other black people at the time, "[l]earning, with its necessary initiation into the mystic processes of writing, is an assumption of the power to dominate" (Ashcroft et al, 84). Through the writing of his memoir Sibiyi is again able to inhabit the position of dominance or power that is directly associated with whiteness. For him the ability to write his memoir places him in the same position as the white man in Apartheid South Africa. It is ironic that he has to be in jail, about to die, for him to be allowed to inhabit this space. Sibiyi supports this irony by highlighting the fact that when he is in jail he is in fact treated better than he had been as a 'free' black man. Instead of acquiring the fame which Nonkanyezi prophesizes he will have because of being a great writer, Sibiyi becomes world famous as an example of the dangers associated with providing a black man access to western education and black urbanization. Colonel A. C. Van Rooyen, head of the prison where Sibiyi is kept, reiterates this view in an article that is published in a newspaper in which he is quoted. Van Rooyen points Sibiyi out as a "tragic example of what white liberal education can do to simple, good-natured natives, stimulating as it was surely bound to do, not only a love of western style of living but also an unbridled desire for white women" (68).

Part of the reasoning behind Apartheid was based on the belief that "the black man was unfit to be free and equal, but that he was ideally fit for slavery; and, second, that the [black man] found his true natural state and thus ultimate fulfilment with a white master. These beliefs that the black man is incomplete without his white master served as a means through which white people in South Africa and around the world were able to justify to themselves the total subjugation of black people. "It is not difficult to see how this [...] contributed to the stereotype of the child-like black man, the smiling contented slave, better off under white domination [...] than in his savage state" (Saint-Aubin 2005, 28).

Sibiyi uses the opportunity afforded him by writing his memoir to remember and reflect on the events that have led up to his death sentence. He is encouraged to do so by Dr. Dufré. The confused and fragmentary nature of the memoir itself, which Sibiyi describes as garbled and not much unlike a post-

modern novel, later, as Sibiya starts to remember more clearly and approaches his death, becomes more structured and clear. This helps to illustrate to the reader the state of confusion that Sibiya is experiencing when he starts his psychoanalytical sessions with Dr. Dufré. It also mirrors the way in which Sibiya's narrative is structured in such a way that initially it seems to the reader as if Sibiya is guilty of raping Veronica since he seems to concede that he might have done so but later as he becomes clearer about what is happening and what happened he tells a story that absolves himself, drenched with adjectives as if to illustrate through the recalling of a lot of detail the validity of his story. True to the form of a memoir, Sibiya is looking back and reflecting on what contributed to him finding himself in the situation in which he is. In turn, he is hoping to access the true motivation behind his "raping" Veronica, primarily Dr. Dufré's scientific endeavour but now also Sibiya's assumed task, as well as explain why the penalty of his crime is so harsh.

During his encounters with Veronica, as well as the one in which he witnesses his mother having sexual relations with Big Joe, Sibiya succumbs to attacks of light-headedness in which the world whirls around him like a "gigantic spinning-wheel" (80). It is during these bouts, which are accompanied by a strong inability to act, that most of the events that bear on the reader's sense of whether or not Sibiya does in fact rape Veronica, take place. The reader's inability to ascertain exactly what happened mirrors the way in which the events that lead up to Sibiya being in jail are veiled by his own uncertainty about what took place that fateful day. Later, however close to the end of his memoir, as well as his life; Sibiya is definite about who is to blame for his demise. When Dr. Dufré leaves after a psychoanalytical session, Sibiya writes down everything that he has been relating to him. He writes it down rapidly, coaxing the memory, which at best, in his case, is unreliable, or at the very worst treacherous. Because of its structure the novel has "overlapping layers of narrative: Dufré also writes, doodling in his notebook" (Starck-Adler, 94). Another narrative voice that is present is Veronica's as mediated through Sibiya.

In the end, after Sibiya has been executed, Dr. Dufré is the one who will leave with Sibiya's manuscript, the product of the rambling mind of a gallows bird (58-59), "and its publication will bring him notoriety" (Stark-Adler, 96). Sibiya is thus effectively writing with a specific reader in mind, a reader who is white and male and, importantly, from the colonial motherland; the same intended readership for whom, one can argue, *Mating Birds* the novel is intended. It is ironic that Sibiya does not tell Dr. Dufré certain things because he knows how he will interpret them, yet he writes them down in his memoir. It is as if Sibiya feels that it would be more acceptable for Dr. Dufré to read what he could not tell him about himself later when he is no longer alive or Dr. Dufré had returned to Europe. This further relates to the way in which

Sibiya is still effectively engaged in a power struggle with white authority and his reader: he is, later in the memoir, very aware of how he is being perceived by his reader. He then also becomes hopeless as to the use of his life and death, and what influence his story may have.

According to Graham, the "novel is clearly a self-reflexive meditation on the act of writing itself" (Graham, 149): "I write not in an orderly fashion, not even chronologically, but randomly, setting down what memory thrusts to the forefront of my diseased mind, with a hasty if confined sense of relief. Relief, if I may say so, not unlike sexual release" (24). Sibiya presents the uncovering of his memories as happening in a very organic manner: without forcedly trying to remember and structure his memory, he allows it to manifest itself and come to the fore on its own terms and in its own time. This attitude of Sibiya towards remembering often frustrates Dr. Dufré, who reads it as a sign of Sibiya's unwillingness to participate in the process of psychoanalysis, which is the sole reason for Dr. Dufré's engagement with Sibiya.

Because Sibiya writes down what he had remembered during his psychoanalytical sessions with Dr. Dufré, it is safe to say that despite Sibiya's conception of his writing as happening in a disordered manner, it is still guided and essentially structured by Dufré's questions. As a representative of the western psychological approach, Dr. Dufré's means of accessing Sibiya's memory is guided and structured by specific questions posed as a way to determine Sibiya's pathology. This process is similar to the one that is conducted in the court, and is obviously presented as contradictory to the way in which Sibiya's extended family questions Sibiya about the same events. Much like Sibiya, who allows his mind and memory to freely "speak" the memories to him, his black relatives also allow him to speak or tell his version of the truth without asking any questions that will structure the way in which the story is told.

Sibiya relates the writing of his memoir directly to the reasons for him being in prison, and thus also to the political motivation behind the severity of his sentence and notoriety of his crime. This suggests that, like "raping" Veronica, writing in itself becomes a rebellion against his defined state of being black. He writes:

Oh, I have often wondered (as most men are apt to wonder, when it is too late and the game is already lost) how my life would have turned out had I not gone to the beach that hot October day, [...] if I had stayed well within the limits of my side of the beach, instead of poaching so close to what is known as the "Whites Only" bathing area. Would I be languishing in this prison cell

now, awaiting death by hanging, or would I have lived to fulfil my ambition of becoming the first truly great African writer my country has ever produced — a future that so many of my friends and teachers had so confidently predicted for me? (13)

## Chapter two:

### Theoretical Framework

One of the many theorists that have commented on the effects of race on sexuality, particularly in colonized black people is Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon asks a question based on Freud's question, "What does a woman want?" Fanon's question is different in that he asks, what do black people want, which opens the way for a post-colonial psychoanalytical analysis of Ndi Sibiya. What he is concerned with in *Black Skin White Masks* is a post-colonial psycho-analytical evaluation of the state of being black in colonial societies. Nkosi does the same in his novel, whereas he deals with Apartheid South Africa as an extension of colonialism. Nkosi and Fanon are both addressing the broader psychological impact racially oppressive societies have on the black person's psyche. A number of Lewis Nkosi's fictional works use Freudian as well as Fanonian themes. An example of this is the one act play, *The Black Psychiatrist*. Fanon in his psychoanalytical study of the black man from within the Freudian framework aims to save the "man of colour from himself" (Fanon, 9) by giving black people a warning that is not much different from the warning Sibiya's father gives to him: do not lust after the white man's woman.

Fanon's answer to the question (What does the black man want?) is that "the black man wants to be white" (Fanon, 9). In his view "[t]his pathological desire is forced upon black people by white civilization and European culture"(Wyrich, 29). Because the "white man is sealed in his whiteness" and the "black man in his blackness" the black man's need to be white remains but a fantasy that can never be realised, at least not in a physical manner (Fanon, 9). Fanon thinks of the race problem in a dialectical manner: he is of the opinion that "white men consider themselves superior to black men", thus causing "black men [to] want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (Fanon, 9). According to Deborah Wyrich this view of themselves as superior, which is held by white people comes from belief that "Africa has no history" (1998, 30).

Upon their first encounters with white Europeans Africa's black people were constructed as "steeped in savagery and ignorance" (Wyrich, 30). For Fanon, the dehumanization and alienation that the black man encounters during his interaction with racist white society is a consequence of his social and economic reality, suggesting that it is only through the violent overthrow of these oppressive socio-economic realities that the black man will finally be able to integrate his internal white self with his external black self. "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily,

economic; subsequently, the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority” (Fanon, 10). The colonized race in Africa, whilst colonised, as well as, as post colonial subjects, was obsessed with notions of race which have not worked towards their liberation. Fanon writes *Black Skin White Masks* in an attempt to rid the black person of this communal pathology, and highlights in it one of the notions that he thinks of as being caused by oppressive racist states, the pathological objectification of the white woman.

The point of reference from which the analysis in this thesis is addressed is strongly influenced by an article by M. Fakhry Davids entitled *Frantz Fanon: the Struggle for Inner Freedom*. The Fakhry Davids article lends itself best to this purpose since it is a useful summary of ‘Fanonian theory’. It is also a discussion that happens within the discourse of psychology and psychiatry, which further supports a post-colonial psychoanalytical reading of *Mating Birds*. Dr. Emile Dufré subjects Ndi Sibiyi himself to psychoanalysis within the same psychological framework that Fanon uses.

A lot of the criticism levelled against Fanon has been because he advocates violence as cathartic for the liberation of the black psyche from the construction and internalisation of the sense of being less than a white person and thus the desperate need to be white. According to Fanon, in *Black Skin White Masks*, an inferiority complex develops in the mind of every black child who comes into contact with white Euro-American cultural dominance. It is important that this black child, when grown up participate in the violent overthrow of the colonial oppressor or, in the case of South Africa, the abolition of Apartheid.

Fanon saw in such a commitment the possibility of challenging institutionalised violence in the mind in which the native submits masochistically to the authority of the existing colonial order - and argued that a willingness to be part of such counter violence can have a cathartic effect in the quest for inner freedom. (Fakhry Davids, 55)

According to Fanon the oppression of the black person is not only externally reinforced but also, because of the colonial [and Apartheid] reality, internally accepted as somehow being grounded in truth. Thus there is no liberation if there cannot be liberation of the mind first, which will then presumably lead to a physical liberation through violent rebellion. Fanon’s view of racist oppression and racism is that they manifest themselves within the racist oppressive state as being reinforced by both side, the disempowered and the powerful, due to the way in which the worlds of black people as the subjugated and white people as the subjugators are structured.

In the oppressive states where the black person is inferior and the white person is superior it is “utterly undesirable to be black”; conversely, the desire to be white becomes strong and “seductive”. The black person who grows up in a “divided, colonial world ends up with a divided internal world – a Manichean world” which causes the person to wear white culture and western norms as one would wear a mask (Fakhry Davids, 62). In the colonial and, to some extent, the post colonial world;

[T]he black skin confers a particular, inescapable psychological problem in that it invites the white to get rid of unwanted content by projecting it into the black. We do not know why such projective identification - the mental equivalent of colonial occupation – targets the black skin so specifically. However, it is an inescapable empirical fact, facilitated no doubt by the negative connotation that blackness has in language. (Fakhry Davids, 62)

Fanon is significant to a reading of *Mating Birds* because he directly addresses the issue of the 'Black Peril'. As is elaborated on in this thesis, there is present in the colonial and post colonial space a stereotype that holds that “the black man is dominated by a wish to rape the white woman” (Fakhry Davids, 62). According to Fanon’s analysis, this stereotype highlights “split of aspects of white sexuality”:

Of course today we are more aware that violence, too, is involved in it. However, whether one emphasises the sexual or aggressive component, in the mind that views the black as a rapist unwanted impulses (and what they represent in the mind), violent hatred of the one who stands in one’s way, and a wish to get inside, dominate, despoil, and possess the idealised white woman- so irresistibly pure and desirable. In turn, this constellation is felt to be such an evil threat to civilised values that it justifies the castration and murder of the sexual black who contains it. (Fakhry Davids, 63)

Though Fanon’s discussion of these issues is based on his subjective experience as a black person from Algeria, previously a French colony one is able to take his discussion and de-contextualise it, since it is a well established fact that though the ways in which the discrimination and subjugation of the colonial ‘other’ may have varied in levels of brutality through which they were enforced, the whole structure was grounded in the same post-enlightenment rationale as colonial and Apartheid South Africa, and thus one is able to speak about the effects of this subjugation in a general sense.

Colonial and post-colonial racist thinking constructs the black object as a slave to his or her base needs. This is a stereotype that is well established in almost, if not all, circumstances in which the white 'master' encounters the black 'boy'. It ironically highlights the fact that it is white people who are inhumanly thrusting this primal desire into the black man, thus leaving him/herself as the idealised superior who, through his higher level of intelligence, rationality and culture has become the "master" of these primitive impulses, just as much as he is the 'master' of the black other. One is also made aware of the fact that it is the white person who is the real rapist who projects his unconscious intentions into the mind of the black person, and this is the motivation for his preoccupation with the black men as rapist.

As mentioned earlier, to Fanon the problems he identifies stem from a collective mental illness on the part of the black person from within dialectical structure. Though the conception of the black person, in particular the black male, as being 'oversexed' and barely in control of his base needs is a white construction Fanon highlights the extent to which these racist stereotypes affects the black psyche and in some become internalised. And so, with specific reference to a discussion of interracial sex and the stereotype of black men as being overly obsessed with accessing white women, Fanon highlights that it is not only the white person who is obsessed with this racist construction, but that the black man himself, when confronted with it he is pressurised into giving way to the stereotype (Fakhry Davids, 63).

Fanon uses the taboo topic of interracial sex as a means through which he is able to discuss broader socio-economic and politic issues in an attempt to save the black man and perhaps move him towards an active and therapeutically violent rebellion. In Fanon's view, the black man in his daily existence in a society in which the white man is racially dominant, cannot but internalise these "outrages and indefensible interpersonal transactions". He thus begins, from a very young age, to behave as if he has two selves, one that is internal and remains hidden, a self that, like a white person's self, thinks of itself in idealised white terms and another that is the external self, the self that is marked by the black skin, broad nose, full lips and curly hair, and is thought of in the same denigratory manner that the white man attributes to it. In Fanon's opinion this problem is the core pathology that is present in the black psyche, and stems from "the legacy of growing up in a colonial situation" (Fakhry Davids, 63). This pathology manifests itself in various ways in society.

As humans we have an innate need to be fully actualised and psychologically integrated, so the black psyche manifests its split identity by way of a conscious or unconscious need in the black person to be white:

Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white.

I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white [...] [w]ho but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.

'I am a white man.

When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilisation and dignity and make them mine'. (Fanon, 63)

This particular observation by Fanon is emboldened by the fact that colonial white society constructed the white woman as the mother of white nationhood. It is in her blood that the source of white dominance lays and thus the desperate need on the part of the white man to eliminate any possibility of the white mother being accessed by the black savage male. A white western standard of beauty further contributes to this stereotypical construction of white women as the ultimate sex objects: within white patriarchal culture itself she is constructed and viewed as a possession whose ownership is to be passed from one man to another through the act of marriage. These facts, coupled with the internalisation of the stereotype of the black man as overly sexual and obsessed with possessing white women by the black man, place the white woman firmly within the space that allows sex with her to be a metaphorical entrance into whiteness and thus, even if for only a very short while, affords the black man the opportunity to experience the state of being white.

Fanon uses sexuality and sexual intercourse as a base for discussion of a broader issue which he terms "a massive psycho-existential complex", and he hopes that by analysing it and shedding light on it he will be able to destroy it (Fanon, 14). He however cites a number of examples in which the internalised sense of inferiority and subsequently the need to be 'white' can be noted, and this thesis argues that *Mating Birds*, as a literary piece, also offers such an example. In *Mating Birds* the black protagonist is affected by the way in which Apartheid, as consequence and continuation of colonialism, was structured and functioned. He subsequently becomes obsessed with having sexual access to white women, and is eventually executed for the rape of a white woman named Veronica Slater. To Sibiya his sexual interaction with Veronica is always a political act and it is clear from his narrative that he never really

thinks that he and Veronica could have a 'normal love affair' in the same way they could have had they both been in a space that was not racially loaded and divided.

Fanon's theory allows for a reading of instances of interracial sex in which the colonial "other" engages sexually with the coloniser, which Fanon views as "the black person's alienation as a function of the common experience of colonial oppression and thus not as a distinctive individual problem" (Fakhry Davids, 67). In other words, black people who live in a racialised social space in which the white person and his culture is dominant suffer the constant bombardment of conscious or/and unconscious, positive and/or negative reinforcing messages that essentially brainwashes the black person by making him or her believe that there must be some truth to some of the stereotypes that the white person has projected onto them. The result of this process of indoctrination is that the black person starts to develop an unconscious or conscious desire to be white, to be 'normal', empowered, dominant, cultured, rational, superior, etc. The sad fact is that "white men consider themselves superior to black men" and because of this "black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (Fanon, 12).

In the case of *Mating Birds* Ndi Sibiya's need to have sexual relations is read as being the pathological manifestation of his desire to be white. It is of this issue that a Fanonian reading of the text may provide a psycho-analytical interpretation of what Fanon terms the Black Problem. For Fanon and Dr. Dufré "the individual should take on the universality inherent in the human condition [...] but in order to arrive at this, it is imperative to eliminate a whole set of defects left over from childhood" (Fanon, 12). In relation to Sibiya's desire to be white, a Fanonian reading provides for a psycho-analytical interpretation of this particular pathology.

### Chapter three:

#### Constructing a Black Male Rapist

Ndi Sibiyi is born on the outskirts of the "white town", Mzimba, in Natal, Apartheid South Africa. He is the favourite son of a large Zulu household, loved, cherished and made much of by his various "mothers" and "fathers", by [his] sisters and brothers, by the many cousins and aunts who normally inhabit a sizeable Zulu Kraal (39). Sibiyi first presents life in Mzimba as quite idyllic and "pastoral", later this representation changes into it not being as idyllic as Sibiyi begins to remember more about his past. Dr. Emile Dufré is a psychoanalyst who visits Sibiyi in prison while he is awaiting his execution. The sole purpose of his visit to South Africa is to document the pathology that lies behind Sibiyi 'raping' Veronica. He is of the opinion that it is here that one is to find the reasons for Sibiyi's "obsession" with obtaining "sexual gratification from a female source other than a woman of [his] own race" (37). Sibiyi, on the other hand, would like to think of his obsession with Veronica as "a passing whim, a momentary loss of control", "madness" and "frustration" yet he also frames it as a political conspiracy and rebellion (37). Whilst growing-up in Mzimba, Sibiyi is not aware of the "prison" he is born into because of his skin colour. He first sees white people when he is fourteen years old. This experience changes his life and sets him on a course that leads to him being in prison awaiting his own death. Sibiyi connects his obsession with obtaining sexual gratification from white women to gaining a Western education - discussed in more detail in the Chapter Four.

When Sibiyi is born, his father is already an old man, and thus spends most of his days communicating with his ancestors, and, as children, they see very little of their father (41). The "Sibiyi lion" prays so much because as an old man he is closer to his death than most and thus feels that he needs to communicate with his ancestors more often to ensure a safe passage into the next world (42). According to J. S. Mbiti, the daily functioning of the traditional African is fundamentally, a religious functioning. Africans are, he maintains, "notoriously religious" and all levels of theirs live are imbued with religion (1990, 2). Sibiyi's father "prayed endlessly for guidance, for prudence in the government of his household, for wisdom in the conduct of his personal affairs" (Nkosi, 43). Contrary to his father, Sibiyi does not believe in his ancestors or God in all his various religious forms: "I believe in nothing, neither in Christian immortality nor in the ultimate fellowship with the ancestral spirits. I have no faith in the hereafter" (43). The only laws that govern Sibiyi's actions are those that are set in place by the Apartheid government to govern the actions of the sub-ordinate black person in Apartheid South Africa as well as the social norms and values he learns and internalizes whilst being socialized.

Sibiya's mother is determined for her son to access western education and thus she decides to send him to school. By doing so, she hopes that he will access a better life and standard of living than she has been able to, because it will be a standard of living that is closer to being white. His father, whom he describes as a "traditionalist", does not like the idea of him going to school. "The old man snorted. Such prospects, as he well knew, were becoming the main lure of the city and motivating force for the young men to leave their fathers' hearths in search of fame and fortune" (44). There is nothing "wrong with tilling the land and raising cattle for beef, and helping to maintain the cohesion of community that was already severely threatened by outside force" (44). Sibiya's father highlights the fact that the attempts at westernization and urbanization that sending his son to school imply that there is something wrong with the way in which Africans lived before Africa was colonised.

Despite the fact that Sibiya's father is a staunch "traditionalist" he is also a "hard-headed " (48) man who is aware of the fact that there may be some benefits to derive from sending at least one son to school in a country where westernization is taking place at an alarming rate. There is, in the minds and hearts of both of Sibiya's parents, the idea that allowing him access to western education will give him some of the power white people possess. White people in South Africa at the time restricted black access to knowledge because they were aware of the power that came with being educated. Because of their non-western worldview black people often imbued whites with magical powers. The complex way education relates to power in these cases manifests itself not only in socio-political space but also in magically space.

Throughout the novel, Sibiya presents his narrative in such a way that it seems as if he believes specific things are destined to befall him. He feels that he is doomed, in some way, to die for his obsession with sexually possessing a white woman and that he was damned from the beginning. It is ironic that Sibiya should feel as if he is destined to die for wanting to "sleep" with a white woman since, according to him, he does not believe in anything religious or spiritual and thus one can conclude that he is suggesting that his obsession with Veronica was caused by the pathologically oppressive nature of life under Apartheid. Sibiya feels that his social circumstances caused his obsession with white women. His sense of doom relates to his exposure to western education, which he presents himself as separating or othering him. When his father decides to listen to Sibiya's mother and allow him to go to school, Sibiya becomes the 'chosen' son, allowed to develop a white/western worldview.

The racist government appropriates land that has been under the Sibiyi family's control for generations, an act that inadvertently causes the early death of Sibiyi's father, who, according to his mother, dies because of heartache brought on by the destruction of his "world". After his father's death, Sibiyi's mother decides to "try [her] fortunes in the big city of Durban" (54). His death entirely disrupts Sibiyi's life contributing to his mother's decision to take him with her, away from the beautiful idyllic Mzimba, to the "squalid" nightmare that is Cato Manor. Sibiyi's mother's name is Nonkanyezi. She has "velvet black skin" and "milk white teeth" that "flash[es] like beacons in the night". While they are still living in Mzimba, Nonkanyezi wears traditional Zulu women's wear that leaves her breasts exposed. Sibiyi describes her as being the picture of youth, fertility and beauty. Through his description of her one gets the impression that she is aware of what her attributes are and knows how to use them to get what she wants. His mother is extremely excited about sending him to school and it is her prophecy that he will be a great writer in future, a "real devil with a pen" (70-71).

On the bus on their way to Mzimba, an older black woman tells Sibiyi's mother of an experience she previously had with a black woman who also received a western education and smoked. Having not encountered many black African women who smoked the old woman asks the smoking woman; "[A]re you not afraid your mouth will catch fire?" (79). To which she then responded:

'[S]hut your mouth, you pagan woman!' [...]

'She called me iqaba! You wait and see. Your own son will call you iqaba one of these days when he has learned to say "scuse me" like a white man and can smoke a cigarette from the corner of his mouth'. (71)

This suggests that a black person who is educated comes to view other black people as inferior, a view (ironically) adopted from the racist attitudes of their white oppressors. Sibiyi's going to school is surrounded with various warnings uttered by people about the major change that is to befall him. This starts to influence his young mind in such a way that by the time he goes to school he does so thinking that it is the beginning of something awful.

*Mating Birds* makes extensive use of forewarning and thus, throughout Sibiyi's narrative, there is a strong sense of impending disaster. Before the "rape", such disaster relates to the Apartheid Government discovering Sibiyi as a deviant "native" who goes to Durban without having a pass. Later, this sense of disaster relates to his isolation and impending death. According to Sibiyi's beliefs, when he dies he ceases to exist. This will be an ethically wrong and unjust death in the sense that he came to

it due to a lie and to racism, and he does not have the power to change that. He constructs himself as a black man born to suffer and then die prematurely for the sake of glorifying the narcissist white female.

One of the reasons Sibiya ends up in jail awaiting his execution, besides being born black in Apartheid South Africa, is his mother's decision to send him to school.

I sensed [...] that the path on which I was now launched would mean at some future date a complete break with the family, with the clan and with all that had sustained my spirits up to now. Henceforth I would remain one of the Sibiya's only in name, but in every way that mattered I would become a "white man", as my half-brother, Siphoh, had once gravely told me. Look at these Zulus who have gone to school [...] [h]ave you not seen the way they walk, sideways like a crab? It is the white man's knowledge that does it to them. They say you can go mad just from knowing too much book. Like the man in the village who stares at a piece of paper full of dots before singing something. (72)

Sibiya begins to believe that by going to school, like all the others members of his race allowed to access white education, he too will become alienated, different, othered.

The counterpoint to these fears in *Mating Birds* is the white fear of being overwhelmed which Apartheid structures embody. In his article, *Towards Darkness and Death: Racial Demonology in South Africa*, Pierre Hugo argues that it was fear that hindered political and socio-economic change in South Africa, which would have given black people equal rights. Discussing the findings of various researchers in the fields of race and race relations, Hugo writes that:

[F]ear whether overtly expressed or not, is an essential element of the Afrikaner's idea of nationhood. [...] [T]he driving force behind the policies of discrimination, segregation and apartheid' is a 'many layered fear', but it is [a]bove all [...] a fear that the past might repeat itself: that they [the Afrikaners] might lose their hard-won prosperity, their political self-determination, and in the last instance their existence as a separate language group and ethnic community. (1988, 569)

What white people fear most about the empowering of the black masses is directly related to their economic situation. They are afraid that their standard of living may drastically decline because of black majority rule. They also fear black people swamping their cultural identity (Hugo, 569). Sibiya's

description of the large crowd of black people surrounding the white family is particularly significant here because it highlights the fact that the black masses of Africa outnumbered the white colonizers. Their need to retain power relates to an anxiety about people whom the whites themselves have constructed as constantly being on the verge of losing control over their animalistic nature and attempting to live out their innate base emotions and needs.

Reports from surrounding states confirmed white fears, especially when violence erupted in the (then) Congo in July 1960 - the time in which Sibiya's narrative is set. During that time "*Die Burger* published 36 'Congo' reports [...]". *Die Burger* along with other Afrikaans newspapers like *Die Vaderland* and *Die Transvaler*, spelt out for Afrikaners that "[t]he Congo had finally exposed the folly of liberalism and integration as solutions to the problem of white and black relations in Africa, and especially South Africa [...]" (Hugo, 572-573). The widespread reports of rape in the Congo were used by these newspapers to propagandize the benefits and perpetuation of Apartheid. The fear constructed in the white South African psyche suggested that if they themselves were to capitulate to black majority rule, white women would also become the victims of black rapists on the rampage, as they had become in the Congo. Hugo's discussion highlights the constant, undeniable sense of anxiety experienced by whites in Apartheid South Africa, an anxiety built upon and exaggerated by the Apartheid government and those who actively supported Apartheid. Since this anxiety concerned the continuation and protection of white South Africa's power, the erection of social borders and the establishment of forces to guard these borders, became extremely important.

When he and his mother get to the store where they buy his school equipment, they discover a white family: mother, father and two daughters – his first encounter with white people. This is his first encounter with white people, and the white South African system which destroys Sibiya's idyllic pastoral childhood. This encounter puts his life on a course that cannot but lead to his execution. There is a large crowd of black people outside the store and as the white family approaches the entrance to the store the crowd, in what Sibiya presents as an almost natural response to encountering white people, starts to clear a way through which the 'baas' and his family may pass. The mood of the events is that of severe panic, fear and anxiety, mixed with a large dose of excitement. The sudden movement of the crowd carries Sibiya forward, irresistibly, until he finds himself right up against the white man, who looks a little surprised at the stir he and his family are causing. Never before had he seen eyes like that:

Gray and dully impassive, without any light or radiance in them, they seemed to have pupils and no centre; they were like two flat buttons in a doll's face.

When the white man moved them, they seemed to change shape again. Now they looked liked marbles, he simply gazed through you with those opaque marbles that resemble the eyes of a blind man. (49)

What is striking about Sibiya's description of the white man's eyes is the way in which he is shocked by the strangeness of them. They are entirely alien to what he has experienced as "normal" eyes among the black people who surround him while he grows up. Sibiya presents the white man's eyes in such a way that one gets the sense that they are unable to see black people. This is illustrated by the way in which the eyes first gaze through Sibiya as if he is somehow invisible and the comparison to the eyes of a blind person. Though Sibiya is so affected by this encounter, that he describes himself as being in a "moment of absolute panic", it is the moment he shares here with the eldest daughter that he remembers and that greatly influences the way in which he thinks and writes about white people. Later when Sibiya is grown, anger and political activism replace the shock and amazement associated with this encounter, as he becomes more knowledgeable about the racist nature of South African white people.

The white man's eldest daughter pauses right at the very moment when she is almost on top of Sibiya. "For an indefinable moment, the girl gazes down at" him, "her blue eyes pools of wonder and speculation, almost like the startled expression of a person recognizing someone she knows or remembers vaguely" (50).

Her body, which was slim and firm and immensely white, was so close to me I could smell it. Then she did something so unexpected, curious and inexplicable that to this day I can find no explanation for it. In order to offer me her hand [...] the girl pulled off her *white glove* so that it was a small naked hand she placed on my bare arm. (50)

Generally, gloves are meant to protect hands from what might soil them. The girl removing her gloves is a means through which she is able to establish some form of intimacy or acknowledgement of Sibiya's humanity. This relates to Sibiya's description of Veronica, who also looks him in the eye, as well as his encounter with her in the tobacco store. It suggests what he perceives as an acknowledgement of him, by white women, as an equal. This recognition of Sibiya as an equal by white women also relates to a separation of him from his own people as well as himself. He, unlike all the other black people present at that particular moment, is afforded the respect and recognition normally reserved for white men.

The surprise the black crowd shows at the act of kindness afforded to Sibiya by the white girl stresses the rarity of this honour. Further, and unlike her father's eyes that look right through Sibiya and thus do not recognise or acknowledge his humanity, the young girl's eyes fully and undeniably see him.

Her eyes seemed to fill the space between us with a flashing radiance that echoed in my blood with the sound of anarchy and the dimmest recognition of the momentous gesture of sympathy one human being can feel for another, a kind of benediction that transforms the moment of contact into one of revelation. (50)

The girl then speaks words of comfort, words that are an impulsive movement towards apology for her family's intrusion into what is after all "the shopping emporium for" them, "the black dispossessed" (51). Though Sibiya is at this stage unable to understand the language that the girl is speaking he is sure, because of her gentle smiling face, that it must have been an apology that she utters. "[T]he girl spoke a language that was meaningless to me except what the eyes and the pressure of her hand conveyed" (50). Communication between Sibiya and white women, from the beginning, is based on non-verbal cues and body language. He is constructed as the one that is gazing, reading and observing his object from afar.

The girl, obviously, takes on an extremely significant role in the narrator's conception of whiteness, first because she and her family are the first white people he interacts with, and secondly because this interaction is positive and is arguably the first time that Sibiya experiences the need to 'possess' a white woman. Sibiya realises the significance of this encounter but decides to keep it from Dr. Dufré. He knows that the doctor will submit it to the process of western psychoanalysis and somehow in it recognise some of the reasoning behind why Sibiya would want to engage in sexual acts with a woman that the law placed outside of the pool of possible sexual partners for him.

It is seemingly only through his engagement with white women that he is able to feel fully actualized or validated. The similarities between the encounter with the white family and the first encounter Sibiya has with Veronica are very significant. However, these are two major differences between them: one is that the encounter with the white girl, when he is young, happens while she is in the company, and thus protection, of her father. Veronica, on the other hand, is alone though one could argue that the sign that was on the beach and claimed her, along with the land on which she was lying as the property of the broader patriarchal system, makes the situations similar. What is definitely similar however, is that both the young girl and Veronica are breaking out of the confines in which their racial identities place them.

Like the young girl, Veronica breaks the social norms that governed racial interactions in Apartheid South Africa by seemingly shunning the protection of white patriarchy, and seeking the company of a black man in order to show him kindness and affirm his equality. After this encounter, Sibiya starts recognising some of the benefits that come with being a white man and having the affirmation of a white woman. He also starts to fixate on white women as primary sexual objects, showing no interest in black women he lives amongst in an “untenanted shack in Cato Manor, the sprawling, fetid slum five miles outside the centre of the city”. Cato Manor is a very dreary place where people drink “skokiaan” “laced with mentholated spirits to give it an extra kick” and make it easier for them to forget about their suffering. Skokiaan is a “dangerous and mind-destroying brew” which was “served daily to black workers” who drank it eagerly. Because of the drinking “until the small hours of the morning”, “violent fights” would break out “some even ending in death”. Meanwhile, “[b]etween the shacks, along the darkened passageways, women would shamelessly offer themselves to the men who take them greedily, standing them up, or leaning them against the wall” (74). There can be no question that young Sibiya witness these things on a regular basis and that inevitably they had a negative psychological effect on him. This is quite evident in the way he presents these events in his text, and later, when Dufré asks him about his childhood.

When they arrive in Cato Manor Sibiya’s mother becomes acquainted with Ma-Mlambo, who is their ‘next-door’ neighbour and who had been a successful diviner before she moved to the squatter camp. Ma-Mlambo acts as a ‘social bridge’ between the rural environment and customs of Mzimba, and the urban “squalor” of Cato Manor. She is symbolic of the change that is to happen to Nonkanyezi and Sibiya, who will now, as Ma-Mlambo first did when she arrived in Cato Manor, encounter black people who do not believe in or attach much value to their traditional methods and customs anymore.

Because of the hardships she encountered in Cato Manor Ma-Mlambo started a shebeen. She forewarns Nonkanyezi about life in Cato Manor, saying that it is particularly difficult to live there because there one found “Coolies! Kaffirs! Boesmans!” competing for survival at the same time. This makes life even more difficult for everybody; except for the whites (75). Ma-Mlambo encourages Sibiya’s mother to also start brewing her own illicit beer. “Nonkanyezi had struggled heroically against insuperable odds to live by a moral code she had brought with her from the countryside [...]” (76). The “outrage”, “disbelief” and “disapproval” Nonkanyezi felt towards brewing beer for sale highlights the conflict that is arising in her as her views start to change from the rural, traditional and collective to the urban, western and individualistic. She soon realises that in the land of the whites there is no caring for your brother, no

broader communal family, there is simply too little available to non-whites in South Africa to share and, as black people Sibiya and his mother, along with millions of others, were destined to suffer the will of the white man.

Instead of brewing beer she starts taking in the dirty laundry of white people. She chooses not to do something that is morally and legally wrong, and instead does something that is to some extent personally degrading to the black person but also speaks of the extreme sense of entitlement of the white person. Nonkanyezi, however, "had never heard of people brewing in order to sell. In the countryside, women brewed traditional beer regularly in order to offer it as hospitality to those who called in for a chat or even strangers who stopped for a gourd to quench their thirst on their way to distant lands" (75).

Every time his mother comes home with a load of washing from white people "half a dozen squatting women" gather to watch as she empties the laundry bags that contain dresses, shirts, blouses, skirts, women's and men's underwear, bed linen and children's clothes onto the floor of their tiny shack. Sibiya and his mother, along with some of these women, then examine the clothes, especially the women's undergarments, with great curiosity, and are moved to disgust when they see the stains or catch the peculiar smell that seems always to attach to white people's clothes (75).

The black women's fascination with white people's laundry serves to highlight the sense of unfamiliarity with the white body felt by Sibiya's mother and others like her. Though the fascination, these black women have with the bodies, particularly the sexual organs, of white women, stems from a need to compare the self to the other. Sibiya's keen "interest", as a young man is tainted with sexual excitement. It will seem as if the city to which Nonkanyezi had moved them "was not to be withstood for long" (76). The city soon changes everything including Sibiya and his mother. Sibiya's is presented as a gradual change whereas it starts with his education, then the stumbling in front of the white family, the first he ever sees, moving to the nightmare of Cato Manor, the death of his absent father and finally his fixation on the underwear of white women. The change that Nonkanyezi undergoes is faster and more dramatic.

First, Nonkanyezi alters her dressing style. She starts to "painfully wobble about in" high heels and wears "cheap Indian prints", no longer wearing the "traditional dress of leather skirt and beads" she use to wear in the village (76). This change of attire starts her integration into a westernized state of being. The rate at which this personal transformation took place is so fast that it seems to happen overnight.

She appears happier, bubbly. Having previously been the very model of what a self-respecting Zulu widow should be she now rejects her traditional values and morals and becomes sexually loose. This change of personality accompanies a physical transformation as her body now becomes fuller, more buxom (78).

It is as part of this change, and seemingly because of it, that Nonkanyezi stopped taking in the washing of white people and started dealing in skokiaan "in order to continue paying for [...] [Sibiya's] schooling". "Many came to her shack to drink; many came to look at glamorous city women, but most came only to bask in the sunshine of my mother's charms and warm dimpled smile and her dazzling good looks". To Sibiya "this was a source of great dissatisfaction, even bitterness". He felt that his "home was no longer [...] [his] own" (78). As well as that his mother is being taken from him who this thesis will suggest had a significant influence on his attitudes towards Veronica, the woman who accuses him of rape.

Recent research categorises rapists into the following groups:

Sexual sadists, who are aroused by the pain of their victims; exploitative predators, who use their victims as objects for their gratification in an impulsive way; inadequate men who believe that no woman would voluntarily sleep with them and who are obsessed with fantasies about sex; and men for whom rape is a displaced expression of anger and rage. (Sadock et al, 854)

What is important to highlight with specific reference to *Mating Birds* and the issues under discussion is that "[s]ome believe that the anger was originally directed toward a wife or mother, [others propose] that a woman serves as an object for the displacement of aggression that a rapist cannot express directly toward other men". Because "[w]omen are considered men's property or vulnerable possessions they become a rapist's instrument for revenge against other men" (Sadock et al, 854). In the South African setting, where Apartheid governs, Sibiya is able to express the anger and resentment he feels towards his mother by raping a white woman, which is then further reinforced by the fact that the white man is that other man against whom Sibiya wants to express aggression but cannot and he thus rapes a white woman instead, as revenge against the Apartheid state. Sibiya, because of the environment in which he is raised, is predisposed to being aggressive in nature and Sadock et al highlight the fact that Sibiya felt anger specifically towards his mother. He describes this anger as "bitterness" and it ultimately contributes to his "rape" of Veronica, which evidently is a violent affair. There were "scars and bruises left by [...] [his] hands on the girl's body", her clothes were "ripped -off", there were "love bites", "torn lips and other lacerations on the neck" with "finger marks on the breast and shoulders" (19). In effect,

the act of "rape" was so violent that it left "furniture [...] overturned" and caused the "bed board" to collapse (19).

Sibiya presents his mother as becoming more alien to him; which may have exacerbated his objectification of women. In his childhood this reaches a climax when he discovers his mother having sex with a man called Big Joe, a "strong man", "with an uncommon personality", "a man different from other men" (79). When Sibiya discovers them having sex, his mother's clothes are in complete disarray. One of her "breasts had popped out of place" and "her entire body [is] quivering in sensuous exhausted passion" (80). Being the proud Nonkanyezi she still tries in that moment of fateful fusion to struggle against Big Joe's wide encompassing arms, but obviously without much conviction. Big Joe's roving hand, tender yet strong, fumbles among tearing undergarments, fumbles, gropes, rifles (80). In his description of this it is as if the young Sibiya cannot make up his mind whether or not he is witnessing something bad happening to his mother. The fact that his mother seems to be willing yet unwilling may explain the fact that he later continues "raping" Veronica, despite the fact that she is screaming and fighting so hard against him that the neighbours come running to see what is happening.

Big Joe is an uncertain, almost inexperienced, lover fumbling, groping, and roving. Sibiya perceives him as hostile also, because he is rifling his mother as a burglar would a house.

Like a dumb suffering beast, Nonkanyezi allowed herself to be pawed, and finally languished against the breast of the big man, a woman still haughty but humbled by a seemingly seething lust. Then all at once, as though a world had suddenly turned on its side, the man and woman began to move together. In a steady, ever-increasing rhythm, they moved and moved and moved together while the world seemed to whirl around me like a gigantic spinning wheel. Transfixed, not daring even to breathe, I watched them, astonished. My mother Nonkanyezi had really changed. (80)

"Recent investigations indicate that the effect of sexual arousal on aggression depends on the erotic materials used to induce such reactions and on the precise nature of the reactions themselves" (Sadock et al, 158). Sibiya's "erotic material" is the real life experiences of watching two people "engage in various acts of love making" which could be similarly if not more affective of the development of a young child (158). If, according to Sadock et al, exposure to sexually explicit material influences the watcher's levels of aggression, Sibiya may have been very angry with his mother at this moment. Besides the "sexually-induced" aggression that he experiences, he also develops a strong sense of sorrow that he

feels is caused by his mother's actions and transformation. It is as if this is when he realises that she is totally lost to him. She will never be his mother again, the young woman who was the favourite wife of a Sibiya 'lion'.

Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, in which a boy feels sexually attracted towards his mother and hates his father, highlights the fact that Sibiya in fact "identifies" with Big Joe. He "wishes to be like [...] [Big Joe, who is symbolic of a father figure,] in all respects, and imagines he is [...] [Big Joe]. He thus wants to be as big, strong and manly as [...] [Big Joe] so that he can enjoy the same respect and love from his mother" (Viljoen, 67). Witnessing this sexual act allows Sibiya the opportunity to live out, although vicariously through Big Joe, his sexual attraction towards his mother. However, this act also causes more anger and "bitterness" in Sibiya, because his mother is "betraying" the bond that they share with each other by giving or allowing another man to access what is his. Sibiya thus, partly because of his mother and how and where she raises him and the things he witnesses as a child, has significant repressed feelings of anger towards his mother. As he grows up and come to understand the situation and circumstances that go along with being a black man in Apartheid South Africa, Sibiya's Oedipal complex shifts its primary source of obsession or love from his mother and those who resemble her to white women.

## Chapter Four:

### Educating the Native

The first western school Sibiya attends is the Lutheran Seminary at Mzimba, but before he is allowed in, he has to be baptized and convert to Christianity. “[T]he white missionaries extracted a price for imparting knowledge to the children of a pagan race” (45). Sibiya has to give up some aspect of his African self to be allowed to enter the world of whites and gain a western education. The baptism and conversion operate as an initiatory act and signal the change that is to happen to Sibiya. Nonkanyezi raises Sibiya to believe that he can do and be anything he sets his mind to, especially if that mind had been altered in such a way that it resembled that of the white oppressors. Nothing is more powerful than a pen and a tutored mind. “Respect, a life of ease and influence were the likely prizes” Sibiya is to gain through his western education (44). Western education to her is a means through which race, in the case of a black person, can be “moved” to a position of secondary. The black person in such instances is allowed, although only in specific situations, the same level of respect and recognition white people encounter on a daily basis for the simple state of being white. In Apartheid South Africa, western education is a means through which the black person is able to “escape” the restrictions of Apartheid as well as the limitations of mind and person that are legally enforced by the laws that keep the system in place: the Apartheid government was adamant in keeping the black man in his place of inferiority. Sibiya’s own perception of the power of the pen, along with the process of writing, mirrors his mother’s beliefs and feelings.

Sibiya excels at school, and thus after completing his final year of high school is awarded a scholarship to attend the University of Natal. It is here that he encounters Professor Van Niekerk a figure that, even when Sibiya is awaiting his own execution, haunts his dreams at night. Sibiya, along with a few other non-white students, have the ‘privilege’ to attend one of the few semi-integrated classes that one found in South Africa at the time, semi-integrated meaning that black students were allowed to attend the same classes in the same lecture halls as “resentful” white students. They would be required, though, not to interact and sit separately. Van Niekerk, whom Sibiya describes as an ogre, a racist pig, and an academic fraud, is uncomfortable with having non-white students in his class. He thus raises the topic of the eventual amalgamation of the races, and states that from his personal experience he has found that the “Bantu”, the Indian and the “Kleurling” have proved to be as anxious as whites are to preserve their racial purity! In what appears to be a counter-argument to this, Sibiya relates to the reader a description of a white female student who is also present in the class. She has blonde hair, green eyes and a loose

sexy mouth (83). She laughs uproariously at Van Niekerk's comment and asks how he knows that black people don't wish to 'amalgamate' (83). The blonde girl making "this query should have alerted [him] once and for all to the fact that, given half a chance, white women will always cause trouble on race questions" (83). This encounter foreshadows his later discovery of Veronica lying on the beach. Sibiya's representation of these events is notably charged with a strong sense of eroticism. The word "amalgamation" used in the manner in which it is done here gives the reader a sense of the blonde girl's question implying sexual intercourse, and through it producing a hybrid race.

Sibiya reiterates this reading by raising the issue of miscegenation through Domus Maynard, the only coloured student in the class, who then spoke up:

Professor Van Niekerk, I am not sure that I understand you correctly, but many coloured people like myself must wonder if they still possess any racial purity to defend after your people made sure to mingle with the blacks in order to produce us brown folk! (83)

The Professor, who already feels a strong need to humble black students, motivated by every injury he feels he has sustained from Domus's words, retorts by saying:

A great historian who needs no introduction to some of us [...] once said of our beloved continent – and I think with a certain amount of justice - that before the white man came there was no African history to speak of in this darkest of Dark Continents. Whether we like it or not, African history commences with the arrival on African soil of the first white man. The history of Africa is the history not of black Africans but of white men in a foreign environment. (85)

Van Niekerk's utterance cause one of the non-white students to giggle uncontrollably, which in turn elicits the following response:

The fact that we live in a continent, marked by the absence of human thought, science and philosophy, a continent in which there is a visible lack of art, music and architecture is not one that we can regard as an occasion of humour. For is it not one of the appalling facts of our circumstances that in Africa we are surrounded not by monuments to the human spirit and human achievement, but by a startling absence, an oppressive spiritual vacuum, an impossible silence? (85)

Van Niekerk entirely denies all aspects of black life, culture and thought. In his view, Africa and the minds of Africans are blank slates when the white man arrives here, ready for the European to write

whatever history he wants on them. According to Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*, the black man is indoctrinated by the white man's world-view which leads to the idea in his mind that "Africa has no history", that before the white man landed here Africa was "steeped in savagery and ignorance" (Wyrich, 1998, 30).

Statements like these, along with the possible influence of his mother's lover, Big Joe (who was involved with unions), motivates Sibiya, in his third year of study, to join a student protest movement at his university. He has a knack for public speaking and is a natural leader. Through rhetoric and the use of language, he is able to convince people of his arguments and in so doing get them to trust, support and admire him. His skilled use of language is also clearly illustrated by his memoir (although a work of fiction written by a fictional character). Sibiya is voted into positions by his peers that attract the attention of the authorities at the University. He receives formal warnings from the Senate, but does not take them seriously, and is eventually expelled.

The last act that leads to Sibiya's expulsion has to do with the displeasure of Sibiya and a number of non-white students against Van Niekerk, against whom Sibiya leads a protest. This is Sibiya's first fight against white authority, as he begins to equate white women with white kindness and he realizes that the white man can be opposed, with Van Niekerk seen as embodying the Apartheid South African government's patriarchy and Eurocentric denial of the black self. Sibiya starts realizing that the white world that his father "hated and feared so much" when he was still alive is built on "shifting sands" and "will be swept away" (81). This is what "Professor Van Niekerk should" have taught Sibiya but fails to do so. It is by "getting to know this alternative history, independently" through "private study and diligent reading" that Sibiya is saved from "a self-destructive rage", becoming strong and defiant without having any real hatred in him (81).

Professor Van Niekerk affects Sibiya so much that he has nightmares in which Van Niekerk appears with his bat-like face wrapped up in cotton wool. It is the same face he saw on Van Niekerk's face the day that Domus Maynard made his comment in class. It is in a state of complete shock, as if Van Niekerk has just been shown a ghost (83). "His white hair standing on end. His long face, like that of a horse, had turned red, one upturned eye staring at the ceiling and another rolling downward. His slack mouth drooled with a purposeless and undefined lust. An ugly face" (83).

According to Sibiya, Van Niekerk, in his dreams, carries an immense manuscript with pages from which words have been carefully erased. Laughing, Van Niekerk would then hand Sibiya the manuscript and bid him walk into the future by following the instructions inscribed in it (82). Besides the obvious metaphor of imparting knowledge that is lacking, referring to the one-sidedness of the Eurocentric worldview Sibiya is exposed to; there is also the related idea of censorship. This refers to what would most probably have happened to Sibiya's memoir if it was ever (by some miracle) to have been published in Apartheid South Africa. Many books written and published by various authors in and outside South Africa at the time were either entirely banned or censored if they were considered undesirable by the Apartheid Government.

Fanon holds that even before a black child has laid eyes on a white person, he or she is "bombarded with the message that white Euro-American culture is both normative and superior" (Wyrich, 45). Things like "[c]hildren's stories, folk tales, magazines, comic books, movies" predispose black children to identify with "white heroes, and reject the black-hearted, dim-witted, often dark-skinned enemies" (Wyrich, 45).

The collective unconsciousness of black people then is programmed for disappointment, alienation, and psychic trauma because the imaginative self-image that white dominated culture offers is doomed to be expressed as false for blacks. (Wyrich, 45)

Contrary to the view black people in Apartheid South Africa had of western education as a means to liberation, Zine Magubane in *Bringing the Empire Home*, notes that "[t]he image of the educated African proffered by white missionaries and government officials [in South Africa during Apartheid and the colonial era] derided African men by suggesting that their quest for education and fully participatory citizenship had an emasculating effect" on them (2004, 176). This view suggests that if the subject is black the gaining of a western education detracts from his masculinity however, western education for the white man is framed as a necessity should he wish to be perceived as having reached his full masculine potential. According to Magubane "white leaders' attempts to place black people outside the political community were rationalized by the invocation of images suggesting that educated black men did not possess the qualities of true men" (2004: 176). The belief propagated was that "[t]rue men revelled in selfless acts of bravery and self-sacrifice, whereas the 'semi-civilized school Kaffir' was simply interested in 'increasing his wants in dress'" (Magubane, 176).

These stereotypical beliefs speak directly to the black man, suggesting to him that his desire for a Western education, whatever his reasons may be, is negative, in that by being educated he will essentially move from a masculine space to a feminine space. This serves as a means through which the white authorities were able to discourage the desire for Western education in the black man himself, and the subsequent demand for equality. The general consensus seems to have been that there was no sense or benefit to be had from giving black people access to the same level of education as white people. The highly educated black masses that would result from such a system would not be able to function desirably in Apartheid South Africa, since there was simply no space in which s/he could live out his “educated life”.

In addition, the education of the black masses was seen by the majority of white citizens as a dangerous endeavour in that it bred in the minds of black people the idea that they should and could in fact rebel against their oppression. Views like these served as a means through which the white authorities could essentially gain support for their drive to change the education system from the Missionary Education system to Bantu Education, which was a means through which the Apartheid Government attempted to provide South African industry with a cheap semi-skilled workforce. Bantu Education, like so many other things in Apartheid South Africa, was meant to lead to the internalization of the idea that the white person is superior on all levels of existence and development and that the black person should accept white patronage as good. It is interesting to note that many of the people who actively took part in the struggle against Apartheid received a missionary education (much like Sibiya) and that it is with the shift from missionary educational system to Bantu education that the struggle against Apartheid and the oppression that is innate to it seems to gain momentum and become more vocal and active in all senses, including physical violence.

Many Africans, including Sibiya’s father, also had some reservations about Western Education and its effect on the black person. This is evident in the warning Sibiya’s father gives him the day before his mother takes him to Mzimba to go and buy what he needs for school:

Tomorrow your mother is to take you to the shops at the white town of Mzimba... This is in preparation for disposing of your body to the white missionaries who will fill your head with all manner of ideas; some of them lies against your own people. [...] I have seen the sort of people they bring out, not black, not white, outcasts and misfits who look down on and despise their own people. (46-47)

Other black passengers on the bus to Mzimba also utter the same sentiment to Sibiya's mother: "Well, you know what these young people are like when they get all that white man's learning! The moment they're able to say 'scuse me' like white people, they want to sell us like so many useless cattle!" (71). These warnings are significant because, like Van Rooyen's comment, educating the black man is linked by Sibiya to his desire for a white woman, as well as him rejecting his own people because of them being backward. "Some, I am told, even go abroad and marry white women. How can that be? Our ways are not the ways of white people. Their speech is not ours!" (47).

Sibiya's mother wants him "to drink of the wisdom of the white man" (47). She has a vision of him "sitting behind those tables the white people use for writing [...] driving his pen across the white page like some of those clerks you see at the government office" (70-71). The use of the word "driving" here suggests a strong sense of power held by the person that is able to soil the "white page" with black ink as it were. Nonkanyezi's perception is that by having power over pen and paper Sibiya will gain power over the white man himself, or at least have the same power as the white man. Conversely, one can argue that to have thought and accepted this as truth Nonkanyezi must to some extent have accepted black knowledge as inferior or lacking. Sibiya's father, on the other hand, does not accept this notion. He seems to be insulted by Nonkanyezi's view, asking: "Did our people not have any wisdom of their own before the white men came?" (47). The "Sibiya lion" is highlighting the fact that there was in fact a multitude of knowledge systems in Africa before the process of colonization began. Even more important, what Sibiya's father is in fact saying is that those knowledge systems are not inferior to any other knowledge system, especially that of the white man. His is a statement similar to those of current theorists, and more recently the post-colonial subject.

Sibiya's father also gives Sibiya another warning - this time about women – and this is the foundation of his story:

Never lust after a white woman, my child... With her painted lips and soft, shining skin, a white woman is bait put there to destroy our men. Our ways are not the ways of white people, their speech is not ours. White people are smooth as eels, but they devour us like sharks. (46)

Fanon posits sex with a white woman as being perceived by some black men as a means through which they will be, although only for a short period, allowed to enter "the white space". By doing so they will be able to experience the same kind of acceptance and respect that is primarily reserved for the white man. If whiteness and blackness are seen as relating to a socio-economic, political and historical identity,

then it becomes clear that what Fanon is talking about is that the black man, in the moment of possessing the white woman, experiences a pathological sense of validation and acceptance that in his mind, even if only for a very short while, makes him feel white. Sibiya's father's warning, and his other comments about marrying white women, suggests the extent to which the novel lends itself to Fanonian readings, since Sibiya is presented as an almost textbook example of the Fanonian subject.

To Fanon "[t]o speak means to assume a culture" (1970, 17). And, as Deborah Wyrich says, "[B]lack people deprived of their ancestral languages face an existential dilemma as feelings of racial inferiority are reinforced through language" (1998, 31). By sending Sibiya to the missionary schools Nonkanyezi is placing him in a position where he will be taught in English and will begin to think of and view the world from within that language system. His world-view becomes that of a western English speaking person. The extent to which Sibiya has become altered because of western education, at the expense of his ancestral language is highlighted through an analysis of the scene where he is visited by his relatives in prison.

His African visitors "come and sit in the visitor's room talking of matters far removed from sexual crimes" (23). It would be culturally unsound for them to approach a topic like interracial "rape" directly:

They talk of the weather, of the drought, and of the ruined countryside after the last year's spring rains have carried the soil off into the ocean. After, they stop and let me talk while they listen. It is a magnificent well-tried method, this silence, never asking any questions. A trap. It opens me up. At such times it is I who *want* to talk; it is I who want to mention everything. (23)

Even though they are avoiding eye contact with him while he narrates his version of the truth he is able to recognize himself in them. They are the same colour as he is and thus they share a similar experience to him as black people living in Apartheid South Africa. Unlike him though, they did not have access to western education and thus, though they are the same colour as him, he feels different from them. Later, after hearing his version of the story his visitors make up their minds as to what kind of person they think Sibiya is and whether they believe his story or not (24). Is he "capable, as the Court seem to be convinced [he is], of seizing a solitary white woman in a cottage by the sea and ravishing her against her will?" (24).

Because of Sibiya's western education, he is unable to make his point accurately, to evoke sympathy for his situation and convince his visitors of his version of the truth. He has lost his ability to speak like them. His rapid speech, the constant shifts of tone and flights of fancy, the unexpected flashes of wit and irony, create an impression of emotional instability, of disconnectedness, which leaves them in doubt as to his moral soundness. He does not speak like them (24). In the quick rhythm of his speech "there is something alien, a wanton disregard for the proprieties of formal discourse in which one Zulu telling a story to another brings to the narrative the constraints of courtly dignity sometimes in a manner so haltingly circumspect as to cause a listener waiting for the point of the story to groan aloud in suppressed torment" (24). Sibiya has lost his ability to communicate in a manner that is acceptable and understandable to his Zulu relatives and visitors, and thus they judge him as guilty if not of the crime he has been accused of having committed, then guilty of no longer being a recognisable and familiar black person to them.

According to Starck-Adler in *Still Beating the Drum*, Sibiya, "does not have his own language" and is "forced to use other languages" (Stiebel and Gunner 2006, 99). Besides English, he also uses "the language of clichés", "the language of founding myths", "the language of the warrior to denounce oppression, acculturation", "the language of the sea", "the biblical language of the curse", "the language of reification to indicate the nothingness of being blacks" "and the in-between language which makes him look like a dangerous criminal" (Stiebel and Gunner, 99). Though Sibiya tells his black visitors the same story he "told in court, to the judge, and his assessors", essentially the same story he tells Dr. Dufré and writes down in his memoir (Nkosi 2004, 125). The telling and retelling have caused his version of the truth to become somewhat "garbled". According to Sibiya, "[i]t had lost any clear logical outline and become a story without any apparent shape or form, like a modern novel whose plot resembles the shamelessness of emotion itself" (125). And as in such novels, things in Sibiya's memoir "happen but the causes remain unclear" (125).

## Chapter five:

### White Veronicas

One thing that remains, even after a close analysis of *Mating Birds* is that in the end it is the reader who must decide what version of the truth he or she will accept as valid - a decision which Sibiya uses as a test of whether or not the reader is 'racist' or not. One gets the clear sense that Sibiya is suggesting that if the reader of his memoir is not 'racist' s/he will accept Sibiya's version of the truth. On the other hand, if the reader is 'racist' and thus structures his world according to racist stereotypes, the reader will accept Veronica's version of the events surrounding the rape. While Veronica's voice is mediated through Sibiya she speaks only three times, the first time when she bumps into him at the entrance to a tobacco store and apologises for doing so, an act which Sibiya interprets as her accepting responsibility for what is to happen between them. The second time is when she speaks to the white man (Sid) who is in her company and then, according to Sibiya, lies about not knowing him, and the third time is when she testifies in court. On all three occasions she is presented by Sibiya as a lying, manipulative, white woman who is desperately trying to save herself from social stigmatisation and shame.

Though Sibiya's version of the events is quite convincing, it still suggests a counter narrative - that of his obsessive fixation on Veronica as a white woman. This in turn suggests to the reader that Sibiya might in fact be a liar and rapist, desperately trying to get his psychoanalyst to believe that he is innocent and thus procure his freedom. This is further complicated by the fact that all the events described are mediated through Sibiya and done so in the consciousness of Dr. Dufré taking the manuscript with him to Europe where it is assumed it will, in future, bring him much notoriety amongst his scientific peers. Through the process of psychoanalysis Sibiya comes to realize that there are quite a number of reasons why he chose this specific arena "for rebellion against the narrow straitjacket in which" Apartheid South Africa is "determined to imprison" him (88). Despite the existing proclivity for white women that stems from his childhood, Sibiya's expulsion from the University, according to him, causes him to lose direction in life, and he becomes an educated black man "devoid of any anchorage or sense of direction" (88). Because of the way black lives were restricted there is no way in which educated black men could become self actualised in Apartheid South Africa - the need to be accepted, acknowledged and treated as equal.

After his expulsion from University, Sibiyi starts taking the bus into Durban in what Nonkanyezi thinks are attempts to find employment. Instead he joins a number of other black youth who explore the beach for misplaced and unwanted items. Sibiyi does not have a pass and is thus illegally entering the city. When the non-white bus carrying Sibiyi pulls into the Durban's bus station there is usually a squad of white policemen waiting to check the passes of the passengers. Black people in urban areas during Apartheid occupied an in-between space, since they were by law not permitted to remain in urban areas and were always in the cities on a temporary basis. Only those with employment would be allowed enter the city, and those found in the cities without their passes were arrested and jailed. Sibiyi, by entering the city and then combing the beach, is breaking the law and thus already rebelling against Apartheid legislation. One gets the sense that it is his view that these laws force the black person to break them, since he has no choice but to break them in order to survive.

According to Ernest Cole “[i]n fiscal 1964, some 2,200,000 crimes were reported in South Africa, which [then] has a total population of only seventeen million people. One third of these were not crimes in any moral sense, but crimes that only a black man could commit-by being in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong papers”. Apartheid legislation was “the keynote on which enforcement of the entire *apartheid* system is based” and this legislation was embodied in all the white-only and non-whites only signs as well as the pass. Cole writes that “[t]he African did not have the right to walk the city streets of his country. His presence in white urban areas [was] tolerated only as long as he [was] required to do his job. At all other times he [was] a trespasser, unless he [had] his “reference book” with its identification card and rubber-stamp permit to move about the white community” (Cole, 40-41).

As soon as Sibiyi makes it past the police he tries to get to the beach as fast as he is able to, since this is where he feels safest. Sibiyi constructs the beach as a transgressive in-between space, a space where he is able to escape the restrictive forces of Apartheid South Africa. Ironically he feels relaxed there because of the large number of white people present:

Beatings, torture are all right, necessary, even inevitable, but everyone understands that such cruelty must be inflicted on the victim out of sight of the public gaze, especially out of the sights of the hordes of foreign tourists, who chancing to witness such arrests and beatings, may carry away with them a less than cheerful picture of our sunny South Africa. (98)

Through this he highlights the extent to which white people in South Africa often times turned a blind eye to the discrimination that was happening in the country. They took refuge behind the fact that they

did not have any direct involvement in the various forms of torture and suffering that are inherent to repressive societies.

It is on one of these expeditions that Sibiya discovers Veronica lying on the beach sunbathing. She is separated from the non-white section of the beach by a small stream. This stream functions, literally and figuratively, as the physical embodiment of the border that exists between the non-white section and the whites-only section of the beach and, more specifically, between non-whites and the white Veronica. The sight of her is so astounding that it stops Sibiya in his tracks. Sibiya presents Veronica as being insufficiently dressed and writes that when she moves he is able to see her breasts. Throughout the memoir, Veronica is constructed by Sibiya as a willing participant in his 'rebellion' against the oppressive patriarchal state that was Apartheid South Africa. They are partaking in a private attempt, through their 'sexual intercourse' and thus Veronica's acknowledgment of Sibiya as an equal, to step out of the unnatural relational positions they are forced to occupy by the racial constructions that govern their respective identities. However, Sibiya's certainty about Veronica's commitment to this radical act sounds very much like wish fulfilment on his part. According to Sibiya when he came across Veronica that fateful day he saw only what white patriarchy, "with the aid of so many laws and legal penalties has forbidden" him and millions of other black men like him "to see, another human being", "[a] woman with a body that was soft, round and desirable", "within reach" (14). To him sexual interaction with Veronica allows him to partake in what to him is the ultimate form of rebellion.

To Sibiya, Veronica is "ancient city", "shockingly alive", dripping suntan oil and "glowing [in] the sun" (12). She is no more than a big, shiny sexual object, constructed as surrendering her body "to the hungry gazes of the African youths" present on the beach (12). To Sibiya Veronica is one of the misplaced or unwanted articles he and the black men on the beach so often find. She too is owner-less and acquirable by them. This allows the African youths to access her, at will, with their "hungry [male] gazes" (12). Veronica is in a position of inertness and is voiceless. This is reiterated by the fact that "[s]ignificantly, the writer makes no attempt to explain the motives of the woman" and thus the reader is dependent on Sibiya's characterisation and representation of her for insight into her motivation and intentions (Ashcroft et al, 85).

According to Sibiya, it is a not an uncommon thing for the white tourists that visit the beach to leave behind items that they no longer found useful or had mislaid. Quite often these 'objects' are young bodies "lying spent and motionless on the warm white sands" allowing the non-white youths to gaze at

them in a “black, mutinous rage” (11-12). When Sibiya discovers Veronica the “black, mutinous rage” these young men would feel at the sight of a young white body lying “spent” on the beach is added to by the fact that “behind the girl’s inert body was the inevitable notice board bearing the [...] [legend]: BATHING AREA – FOR WHITES ONLY!” (14). Seeing this sign further enrages Sibiya and the youths, as it functions as a reminder of their oppressed state as black men in Apartheid South Africa and how the law determined what, who, when, how and where they are authorized to be.

Sibiya’s description of Veronica as inert - without power to move or act - is contrary to his representation of her as an active seductress, but supports the construction of her as an abandoned gift or treasure, except for the sign that looms over the scene functioning as a means of claiming white tenure over Veronica and the beach. This reiterates the extent to which Sibiya, already at the moment of discovering Veronica, is interested in accessing, sexually, some willing white woman and thus rebel against white patriarchy as well as experience a sense of acceptance and acknowledgement he constructs as only possible through a relationship with a white woman.

Looking back and reflecting on these issues, Sibiya, while he is writing his memoir, is still uncertain about what had seized him that momentous day. He suddenly, for what according to him was about ten minutes, gazes at her “prostrate form” and feels a “feverish, almost desire” for Veronica (15). Like her earlier state of inertness, “prostrate” here refers to Veronica lying stretched out on the ground in a position that is associated with submission. Sibiya’s reading of the situation is that through their physical positioning he is placed in a position of power and Veronica in a position of vulnerability and disempowerment. For him this is confirmed by the fact that they never speak to each other, at least on the beach.

According to him what he feels towards Veronica is not purely sexual desire but also “something vaster, sadder”, and more “profound” than that. “Mingled with that feeling of desire was another emotion: anger” (15). He experiences a “sudden, all consuming fury and blinding rage” since he experiences Veronica’s lying there “as a jibe, a monstrous provocation” placed in his path by the Apartheid government and South Africa’s racist white community (15). According to him, Veronica is entirely unaware of him at first. This does not surprise him, because it is his opinion that “[p]eople like her never are” aware of the effect they have on others (15). This reflects his later construction of her as an example of whiteness, as narcissistic and self obsessed.

This process, of him observing her while she remains ambivalent, until finally she looks up and acknowledges his humanity by looking him in the eyes, becomes the normal routine according to which Sibiya and Veronica's encounters unfold. The act of looking at and desiring the white female body without being reprimanded adds to Sibiya's obsession with possessing that which is marked as being off-limits to him. Veronica is read by him as open, naked and understanding (15) and Sibiya perceives her as surrendering herself to him as she stares into his eyes. She is perceived as "neither smiling nor scowling, simply and openly staring, giving the impression of a person taking off her clothes in the presence of a lover from whom there was no need to conceal anything" (15). By doing so she is acknowledging him as worthy an 'object' as valuable as her. "[F]or having looked and seen what is not meant for [his] eyes to see" and not having been reprimanded for it, Sibiya becomes "marked forever with the sign of Cain" (16). This helps to reinforce Sibiya's representation of himself as doomed by suggesting that he is not responsible for his actions, instead it is the racist Apartheid social environment which causes him to fixate on Veronica.

Sibiya, at the time when he is writing his memoir, is very aware of the reasons for his predicament: for example he confesses to becoming obsessed with finding out why white men were so defensive of white women. As time progresses and his obsessions grow he describes how he becomes consumed with the mania of being sexually intimate with a white woman:

At first this idea was no more that a vague intention, but later it acquired the fatal attractiveness of an ungovernable passion. When the English girl finally appeared out of nowhere, bearing her wealth of sexual plenitude and very little else, [...] she seemed to have been put in my path in order to answer a great and overwhelming need. (57)

When Veronica returns Sibiya's gaze he reads this as a willingness on her part to engage with him in the same sexual rebellion that he has been fantasising about. It is thus that from that day onwards he 'haunts' her path and follows her wherever she goes, even taking the massive risk of going into a white neighbourhood where he watches her through a window as she partakes in an orgy.

Every day, Sibiya takes the bus in to Durban and then makes his way to the beach as fast as he can where he "gratefully" lies and waits for Veronica to appear, "like a tormented beast" (100). He does this at what is presented to be about the same time every day, and this is in keeping with his representation of these meetings as a rendezvous between him and his "secret paramour" (98). Veronica, according to him, arrives whenever she wants to and, when she does so she is often annoyed by his having fallen asleep while waiting for her. This representation of her is in keeping with his depiction of her as an

egotistical white woman, someone who is excited by the obsessive attention she is receiving from a black man who is her racial subordinate and 'other', with the power implications that this carries.

As mentioned before, because their relationship is conducted in silence, Sibiya and Veronica are unable to arrange a meeting with each other as well as explain each other's non-appearance to each other. On these occasions, unlike when he first discovers her, he presents himself as being in the position of worshipper, since he would then be lying "prostrate" on the beach, emphasising the fact that he appears to be more obsessed with her than she is with him (98). His obsession is based on the warped fantasy that through his worshipping of her, she will ultimately allow him to have sexual access to her and by doing so he hopes to experience a sense of "whiteness" by proxy. For him, her obsession, on the other hand, seems to stem from a self-absorbed, conceited need to be 'worshipped' and 'glorified' by his self-subjugation, which is supported by Veronica's testimony in court that she was entirely unaware of Sibiya's existence: it does not matter who does the worshipping as long as it is done. When Veronica finally does arrive on the beach she passes so close to his "prostrate body" that he can smell her and if he reaches out his hand he could even touch her (98). Yet, despite the fact that the two are so close to each other in reality, according to Sibiya's account of the events, he and Veronica may just as well have been in "different parts of the universe" (99). As Sibiya has no concrete evidence of Veronica's feeling she may simply be a tabula rasa onto which Sibiya may project what he wishes.

One day, Sibiya 'bumps' into Veronica at the entrance to a tobacco store. To Sibiya, what is significant about this encounter is the fact that it happens in plain sight of a number of white people who are unable to notice the awkwardness of their behaviour towards each other. He suggests that they are unable to notice how familiar his dealings with Veronica are because of their metaphorical blindness. Their racist stereotypical classification of the world forces them to see the interaction between him and Veronica as the accidental result of a clumsy native not looking where he is going, and does not allow them to notice how "overly gauche and bashful" the two are being towards each other (89).

Anyone but a white South African at the time, a people so accustomed to regarding the blacks as nothing but pegs on which to hang their hats, would have surely remarked that something was amiss here. They would have been forced to detect in our odd behaviour [...] not the reaction of an innocent white woman bumping into a clumsy black man; not the harmless collision between white madam, both irreproachable and unapproachable, and a native male, timid and helplessly immobilised by fear, fear of that contact with a woman of a "superior race" that we are all supposed to have. (90)

What is obvious in Sibiya's depiction of this situation is the strong political subtext with which he imbues it. Further and more importantly, Sibiya realizes that he and Veronica can have physical contact, that despite the laws of the country as well as the whites present no loud alarm bells went off when they did. The act of interracial sex and rebellion becomes something that can be hidden, although it is happening right under their white noses.

This is the only time the two address each other: "I spoke then, "I'm so sorry! Please excuse me!" (91). "[Veronica] spoke in a lowered tone at once courteous and surprisingly shy for a white woman addressing a native" (91). Veronica's voice helps to support Sibiya's conception of her as a white woman who differs from other white women in that she, at least at first, lacks the self-righteous exercise of power over the black subject. During all the other encounters Veronica has with Sibiya, when she speaks, she seems to be empowered by her whiteness and it is only on this significant occasion at the tobacco store that her words empower Sibiya. After Sibiya apologizes for bumping into her Veronica responds by saying: "'Entirely my fault!' she had said. 'It's entirely my fault!' Whatever else followed would be her fault. This she had acknowledged" (92). Thus according to Sibiya's construction of her, which is similar to Fanon's construction of white women in racialized space, Veronica is a co-conspirator in her own rape. This patriarchal construction of the white female who essentially rapes herself is supported by Sibiya's construction of Veronica as seductress who later lies when she says that she does not know him and that he raped her.

After this meeting Veronica's image as an unobtainable white woman changes in Sibiya's mind; previously she had been a dream, a fantasy, but now after his having touched her she becomes real. She is a tangible white woman who is perceived as being willing to engage in sexual relations with him. In his mind, through their sexual interaction, they will partake in a socio-political rebellion against the spaces into which the Apartheid government has classified them both, shrugging off their different and restrictive racial identities. After this moment at the shop the couple choose to never speak to each other again. This, according to Sibiya, is because they both understood the complexity of their situation and how it would become more problematic by the use language. Sibiya presents Veronica as understanding this as much as he does, him reading them as both knowing that it was illegal for them simply to conspire to commit an 'immoral act', let alone partake in it.

After bumping into Veronica at the tobacco shop, the 25 year old Sibiya returns to the slum of Cato Manor where he and Nonkanyezi still live. That night Sibiya is beleaguered by "harrowing dreams" (93), the most significant of which is a dream in which he is standing in front of a "Zulu court" with a "gaudy

Zulu Monarch” surrounded by quite a number of his indunas, soldiers and other courtiers (93). This dream is presented as the elemental metaphor for Sibiya’s ‘corruption’ and death. Sibiya is in the middle of the crowd, entirely naked and on a pedestal. Again, the pedestal functions as a means through which, Sibiya is presented as being separated from or even above the average black person in South Africa at the time in which the book is set. He is aware of the fact that he is accused of something and is thus standing trial but does not know what his crime is. Sibiya’s nakedness symbolizes the extent to which his desires and needs are exposed and clearly visible to everyone present, though this exposure is absent when he is awake because he is then able to hide his desire and need for white women. The patriarch, who is symbolised by the king, represents the Apartheid government as embodied by white men who are figuratively and literally as racially removed from black men as kings are perceived to have been from their subjects because of their superior blood. The other people present are read as characterising the greater South African population, white and black, who are later fascinated by the very public trial of the ‘native’ who has raped the white woman.

All of a sudden the king’s daughter appears wearing only some beads and a “shimmering blue veil” (94). She begins to dance in what is meant to be a seductive, erotic and arousing manner determined to provoke a physical reaction from Sibiya that will in turn signify his lust for her. At first and as expected by the crowd, Sibiya is able to withstand her sexual “taunts” and keep himself from having an erection, but then “like a well-trained stripper doing the Dance of the Seven Veils; the king’s daughter begins to remove her transparent veil, disclosing a wealth of physical beauty extraordinary to behold” (94). The sight of this drives Sibiya to “an almost manic frenzy” that in turn causes him to lose control over his sexuality and desire and have an erection (95). In his state of arousal he becomes overtaken with the need to penetrate the “forbidden portals of the royal hearth” (95). In his dream as in life Sibiya characterises himself as the innocently accused ‘inferior’, forced by his socio-economic and political circumstances, as well as the skilled sexual taunts of a narcissistic, sexually immoral, ‘superior’ woman, to become aroused and subsequently consumed by the need to ‘enter’ her and thus the space that she represents. Having been tempted to the extent where he loses control over his rampant sexuality, symbolized by his large black penis, Sibiya becomes consumed with the lustful need to sexually penetrate and thus possess the princess who in turn is symbolic of Veronica and white women in general.

Just as Sibiya is about to enter the princess the king instructs his soldiers to “Seize the traitor! Seize and kill him instantly!” (95), but this is too late as he was already “burst[ing] through the inner sanctum of the royal hearth, and once [he] was joined to the princess, [he] was simply indifferent to [his] fate” (94). This

dream, according to Dr. Dufré and this thesis, is “obviously a wish-fulfilment dream” and serves as a means through which Nkosi is able to foreshadow and frame what is to happen to Sibiya. As in his dream where he is unable to resist the princess’s ‘seduction’ and consequently penetrates her, when he is ‘raping’ Veronica, Sibiya is unwilling or unable to stop the sexual act, even though he is aware of the dire consequences and hears people approaching. In his dream his sexual rebellion is interrupted when one of the king’s guards stabs him with a spear; later, when he is ‘raping’ Veronica, he is pulled off her and knocked unconscious by a group of angry white men. His unwillingness to exit the white space or the space of ‘superiority’, even when told to do so, stems from his belief that it is only through the penetration of the “forbidden portals of the royal hearth” that he will be able to “achieve total liberation” (95).

Motivated by the encounter with Veronica at the tobacco store as well as the subsequent dream, Sibiya cannot help but return to the beach in a desperate attempt to ultimately actualise his need to have sexual relations with a white woman. On this particular day, however, Veronica does not arrive. Sibiya waits for her as usual, but as time passes he begins to suspect that she is not going to come. He begins to fear that the awkward meeting at the tobacco shop the previous day had somehow frightened Veronica and that she has decided not to return to the beach and possibly never will. He is inundated with “a feeling of great desolation” “terror and despair”, “as if a door had been shut in [his] face” denying him access to his prized white statue (100 - 101).

Faced with the prospect of having lost the one opportunity to rebel against the externally constructed identity that hemmed him in, Sibiya gets up from the beach and starts walking in the direction of Veronica’s bungalow. At first, he presents himself as unaware of where he is walking to and why, which supports his representation of himself as being unaware of how dangerously obsessed he has become with Veronica, but he soon realizes that he is determined to see her and somehow, non-verbally one would assume, persuade her to continue with their meetings and eventually grant him access to her “royal hearth” (95). This signals to the reader the extent to which Sibiya is blinded by his obsession and that he is indomitable about accessing Veronica, and the space of whiteness that she symbolises; unwilling to let the opportunity pass him by despite being aware of the consequences of such an act and whether Veronica is willing or not.

When he arrives at Veronica’s bungalow he does so just in time to see her leave in the company of a “fat” white man with “fleshy lips” (102) whom Sibiya perceives as one of Veronica’s clients. According to his representation, Veronica has given up a rendezvous with her anonymous, silent black ‘lover’ to

engage sexually for money with a white man. She places financial gain and the white man's desire and sexual need above his need. The white man, who is named Sid, takes on the role of protector of white Veronica's virtue, a role that is reserved for him because of his white skin. He notices Sibiya standing outside Veronica's gate for what he assumes is no reason and asks her if she knows what the "kaffir" wants (102). According to Sibiya, Veronica then lies and tells him that Sibiya must be "[s]ome vagrant native" and asks: "How am I to know every stray native?" (102). The use of the words 'kaffir' and 'native' resonates with Sibiya and the reader since it is a stereotypical construct held by racist whites that all "natives"/"kaffirs" look the same and thus it is difficult to differentiate between them. There is also the suggestion that, because of their perceived lack of worth as individuals, there is no need to distinguish the black individual from the black group. Sid orders Sibiya to leave, saying that Veronica, Sibiya's "missus", does not want him there. Veronica intervenes by telling him to leave Sibiya alone, since he had not broken any laws by being there. This in reality is totally untrue, since it would have been illegal for Sibiya, as a black man, to be in a white neighbourhood, at night, without his pass and for no apparent reason. These kinds of occurrences and interactions between "vagrant native" and white "missus" are exactly what Apartheid was designed to keep from happening.

After Sid and Veronica leave, Sibiya decides to break into the bungalow, doing exactly what Sid as representative of white patriarchy fears he would do. He notes that "the single most dominating feature of the room" was the "wide, high bed covered with its unembroidered white quilt and a pile of soft pillows", suggesting "sovereign calm and purity of taste" (103). This surprises Sibiya, since his perception and construction of Veronica is of her as a manipulative 'high class tart' and thus he expects to find a room that is more in keeping with this image of her. What he discovers when he enters the bungalow is a "spinster's room" and this image is not reconcilable with his projected perception of her as a sexualised white object (103). What is presented as being even more surprising to him is the fact that there is no obvious evidence that Veronica and Sid have just had sex in the room or on the bed. Yet paradoxically, Sibiya is also made uneasy by the lack of explicit evidence that would confirm Veronica's "abnormal" sexuality, manifested through her perceived irregular pleasure at being admired by a black man. Sibiya leaves the bedroom and enters the bathroom, and it is in this intimate, personal, "white tiled" space he finds what he is looking for (104). The memory of this is so vivid that later, when Sibiya is recounting this incident to Dr. Dufré, he is magically transported back to "that palace of white marble", "full of mirrors as if there to reflect an aspect" of Veronica's "personality" or to "confirm her existence" (104). This space of narcissistic whiteness is more in keeping with how Sibiya characterises Veronica and it is thus here that he feels closest to her.

Standing in what is arguably one of the most private rooms of a person, Sibiya experiences a sense of being “bonded”, whilst still being “free” at the same time (104). He experiences the same kind of sensation he did on the night he witnessed his mother having sex with Big Joe. His head swims; he feels “dizzy” and experiences a state of “heightened consciousness” (104). Magically the white marble palace walls starts to resemble “a dreary whitewashed prison”, a clear foreshadowing of Sibiya’s future fate. This functions as another forewarning to Sibiya that the path on which he is on will inevitably lead to his incarceration and death. Desperately, he scans the room around him in an attempt to escape from his own hallucinations. It is only when he focuses his gaze on Veronica's “scanty, elaborately embroidered bras”, her nylon stockings dangling out of the laundry basket”, “the lace panties hanging on the rail above the shower tap”, “her toothbrushes, eyebrow pencils, bottles of perfume, powder puffs” and “lipsticks” that he is able to escape this sudden bout of disorientation and sense of imprisonment (104). Because these intimate items give Sibiya the feelings he does not get from the items in the bedroom, which is an impression of the occupier of the bungalow that is in keeping with his perception of her, he is able to escape his hallucinations and reground himself in reality. These items are also innately sexually loaded and thus Sibiya’s sexual excitement serves as a means through which he is able to ground himself in his own physicality, despite the fetishist nature of his sexual arousal.

When Sibiya turns around after staring at Veronica’s underwear for a while he catches a glimpse of his own face in one of the many mirrors in the bathroom and is taken aback by what he sees. He does not recognise himself, writing that his face seemed like the face of a stranger being reflected back at him in the mirror. Sibiya is most surprised by the “black lustre” of his own eyes (104). “They were so limpid that for a moment I had the illusion I was staring into someone else’s eyes!” (104). This reiterates the sense of duality Sibiya describes himself as experiencing in that moment and suggests that Sibiya has become so changed and disturbed by his obsession with Veronica that he has become a stranger even to himself, in fact disassociated from himself.

This confrontation with his own face, along with some voices outside of the bungalow, shocks him into leaving and upon doing so he decides to rid himself of his obsession with white Veronica. In a desperate attempt to wean himself off Veronica he decides to not return to the city again. He is able to stay away for three days but on day fourth he returns to the beach, a sign that he is unable to live an oppressed and suppressed life. When he gets to the beach, he again lies down on the sand and awaits Veronica’s arrival, and when she finally arrives they enact the ritual Sibiya constructs them as acting out every time they meet on the beach and which starts on the first day he discovers her: Veronica passes very close to Sibiya on her way to her side of the beach where she, for the first while at least, entirely ignores his

presence, in keeping with her role as white woman. Then she looks him directly in the eyes thus acknowledging his presence and equality. On this occasion, because of his three day long absence, Sibiya is unwilling to play the passive participant in Veronica's game. He makes it absolutely clear to her that he wants her attention and that he has missed her. He does this by doing "some athletic exercises, a few spectacular somersaults, perfectly silly contortions, cartwheels, everything short of standing on [his] woolly head in the sand" (110). All of this to get her attention, and yet she refuses.

"Balked, baffled and deflated", Sibiya concludes that a girl like Veronica knows very well the rules of the game of seduction and power that she is playing with him, "after all, manipulating men, even if by affecting this absurdly bored indifference, was her business" (111). He remembers the "fat white man with the blunt, moronic face" (Sid) that he saw leaving her bungalow three days prior and begins to think that he, too, is one of the victims of Veronica's whims (111). Veronica's reply to Sid's question about whether she knows Sibiya or not is previously presented by him as an attempt to keep their 'relationship' secret, but now he constructs her as lying to protect herself from persecution and ostracism, and frames it as further evidence that she is "dishonest, peevish and shameless" (111). Accordingly, Veronica is a woman who uses her body and sexuality to manipulate men to get what she wants. She is innately narcissistic and selfish and does anything within her means to get her way, even if it is amoral or socially unacceptable. She, within this framework, does not care about Sibiya, but instead only cares about herself and enjoys the sexual attention and adoration that she is receiving from an obsessed black man, or men in general.

Sibiya questions why if, she has no inclination for a sexual relationship between the two of them, she is using her body in such an obviously sexual manner as to excite him? In Sibiya's eyes, when Veronica decides that she has teased him enough, she starts to loosen her bra, and lowers it down her shoulders. Then significantly, she quickly glances at Sibiya, for the first time that day, and gives him a look that he perceives as an attempt to say "How about that for a quick glimpse" (112). The fact that this fleeting glance is directed at Sibiya is supported by the 'actuality' that she is essentially "stripping" for him and is supported by the merest suggestion of a smile that hovers around "her slack, sensual lips, with that insidious but alluring look of random lust" (112). Characterised as both cunning and concupiscent, she is presented by Sibiya as being sexually excited at partaking in this transgression and his adoration, and she engages in an elaborate 'dance' of seduction and power. What makes this encounter significant is the fact that Veronica does something that is different and bolder than anything that she had done before: she starts to move her hips in a sexually suggestive manner and then proceeds to thrust her tongue in and out of her mouth, mimicking the "spasms of coition" (112). Her blatant sexual behaviour is

in keeping with how he presents her as acting towards men in general (112). As the skilled stripper and whore that Sibiya presents her as, she is able to perform lascivious sexual acts like this quite easily.

Sibiya answers Veronica's sexual performance by enacting his own. Her blunt behaviour makes him feel "released from his own cautious reserve" (113). He 'competes' with her, in an attempt to arouse as much sexual excitement in her as she in him. He does this whilst imagining "thrusting his wet tongue into Veronica's open orifice" (113). In, what he describes as, "an arrogant", "insulting", "offensively contemptuous" manner he projects his tongue through his pouted lips and then starts to "indecently roll it around in a wretched imitation of a sexual organ gone berserk" (113). The language used here by Sibiya highlights the extent to which his sexual obsession is coloured by his anger at white society. In response to this Veronica in turn starts to "undulate her hips in an indelicate manner" that is, although obviously erotic to Sibiya, undetectable to the other white people that are also present on the beach (113).

By this time I was nearly delirious! For the first time the girl was offering her body to me as plainly as if she had uttered the words of surrender. A perfect stripper she must have been. It showed in the skill with which she touched herself in her unhurried, methodical way, [...] her hand as light as a feather, swift in that quivering pagan motion of astounding primitive sensuality, while she continued to keep her eyes fixed on me in a kind of mocking hypnotic gaze. (113-114)

They continue with this sexual dance until they both have orgasms that drag "their retching flesh across the space of prohibition and taboo that separates them" and unite them in their pleasure (114). Immediately after she reached a climax, Veronica disengages from Sibiya and falls asleep. This long passage of 'love making' is so surreal as to suggest that Sibiya is in fact fantasising and that the only sexual act that is taking place is masturbatory in nature. Sibiya is then left only with the evidence of what had just transpired which is as "material as if he had purposefully just brought himself to a climax" (115). Spent semen is all he has to show as evidence of the extremely significant event that has just taken place. Significantly this is an act that Veronica entirely denies whereas she claims that she never saw Sibiya before the moment she woke to find him in her bungalow.

When she finally wakes up Veronica gets up and leaves. Sibiya follows her and when they get to her bungalow he remains standing outside her gate whilst she enters the dwelling but, according to him, she then left the door wide open and started to undress, carefully and seductively removing each item, again

performing another striptease for his sake. Yet, Sibiya presents himself as being disillusioned by the sight of Veronica naked; it seems as if she had been more alluring to him when she had had some clothes on, even if very little. However, paradoxically, according to Sibiya, Veronica “was like a burning flame, something of the devil placed there to lure me to my perdition” (133), and he was overcome with lust. It was thus, in his mind, not his fault that he ran up the stairwell and ‘raped’ Veronica; instead it was a natural consequence of his pathological obsession with white women and Veronica’s perceived willingness to acknowledge him as an equal and engage with him sexually. But, essentially, as in the old tale of the Garden of Eden, it was *her* fault.

Like a river in flood, my lust swept me off toward that half-open door, toward the room in which the girl lay like a watchful lioness ready to pounce. As though in a trance, I was running up those steps, hurrying toward the door and the now temporarily invisible body. (133)

However, by Sibiya’s own account, when Veronica sees Sibiya entering her bungalow she “half [rises] from her vast [white] bed, [and utters] a small cry of surprise as befits a solitary woman who finds herself suddenly confronted with a strange man in her room; to say nothing of a white woman who, naked as a newborn baby, wakes to find a native male staring down at her vulnerable white body” (133). According to Sibiya, Veronica’s cry was “not really one of alarm” as one would expect a white woman in her situation to utter instead it was rather “perfunctory” (133). As further evidence of the fact that her cry was one of surprise and not alarm or an attempt at voicing her refusal Sibiya highlights the fact that she does not get off her bed and gives no sign of wishing to do so, instead she lies on her back, staring up at him. Sibiya perceives in Veronica’s face the “look of wild despair coupled with a hot eagerness for what was impossible to give a name” (134). She is frightened, almost repelled by him and yet at the same time is extremely sexually excited, perhaps projecting his own mixed reactions onto her. Veronica’s behaviour is in keeping with Sibiya’s characterisation of her as willing white female, since the state of being repelled and yet attracted to him suggests that she is sexually willing and attracted but somewhat apprehensive about engaging sexually with her racial other.

I seized her then, seized her roughly with a long-stoked-up violence that was a halfway house of love, murder and rape. I even enjoyed the swift mobile look of fear that shot across her face, but there was also in the depths of her eyes a perverse excitement. (134)

All of this happens so quickly though that Sibiya is uncertain about how much of what had “happened was wholly of the girl’s bidding” and “how much the result of [his] own wayward impulse” (14). He is thus

not sure whether he is entirely blameless of the crime he is supposed to have committed, and thus when he first presents the tale to the reader he seems to be telling the story of an unwilling sexual act/rape (14). Later, however, because of the psychotherapy and through the process of writing, Sibiya presents himself as remembering exactly what happened that day, and the days leading up to it, and thus arrives at the conclusion that Veronica is a liar and he the victim of her sexual games.

According to Sibiya, Veronica 'makes love' with her eyes open (135). Although her eyes may have been wide with fear to him she is acknowledging him and as she stares into his eyes. This adds to the sexual excitement and intimacy they, according to Sibiya, are experiencing. "[C]ome what may, I was determined to reach my climax" (136). This suggests that Sibiya has stopped caring about Veronica as a willing partner and instead, has been overtaken by the need to experience, what in his mind, is the ultimate form of sexual pleasure. Despite this the question remains whether he ever did care about her particularly as his touching of her is impersonal and has no hint of foreplay to it.

It is at this point that his dream about the princess becomes reality and the splendid fulfilment of his obsession is interrupted by the presence of the white patriarch:

A rumour of melancholy strains and the sullen wavering rhythms of dancers approaching the bungalow in hesitant steps like the footsteps of a weary soldiery. Then they were at the door. The sound of boots thundered in my ears. I was seized by the neck, yanked off the body of the girl, and thrown against the wall. A fist crashed into my face, a well-aimed boot, and I subsided into a sweet state of unconsciousness. (136)

Finally Sibiya's longings and fantasies come up against the reality of the white state – an encounter which he has, in a sense, courted through his flouting of Apartheid structures and values.

Sibiya's version of this event is placed in direct opposition to Veronica's which is made by him to seem like the elaborate fantasies of a skilled liar, her motive, from the way Sibiya presents her being an attempt to protect herself from prosecution and social disgrace. In the witness box, contrary to how she is on the beach and with her clients, Veronica is a "trembling, rocking bird, sleek and fine-feathered, her eyes blank", without a doubt the eyes and perfect picture of a rape victim (116). Unlike Sibiya who, when visited by his relatives in jail and whilst testifying in court, fails to communicate effectively, Veronica is presented as an accomplished orator who has a considerable grasp of human psychology. The problem that Sibiya faces when he stands accused of the rape of Veronica is compounded by the

fact that he as a black man in the prison house of Apartheid South Africa, is immediately judged as a liar.

According to Veronica, on the day of rape she suffered because of the extreme heat, and therefore left the beach and returned to her bungalow. When she finally gets to her bungalow she is so affected by the heat that the first thing she does when she walks through the door is to start taking off her clothes and then she lies down on her bed. Veronica leaves the door open, suggesting that it must have been because of the oppressive heat; “[The] Met office people said it was the hottest day they could remember in twenty-two years. Birds were falling off the rooftops. I must’ve lost any sense of modesty” (117). According to her she must have “completely flaked out” because the next thing she remembers is that she was woken up “by a noise of something moving about the room” (118).

I thought I was dreaming! Suddenly there was this native standing over my bed, his eyes looking sort of wild and crazy. At first I didn't know what to think. Was I seeing things or what? Well, honestly, I couldn't believe it! Horror of horrors! There I was, stark naked, in the middle of this vast unmade bed and all of a sudden, out of nowhere, a native man was staring down at me as if I were a piece of mutton or something! I was so shocked I didn't even have time to think to cover myself! (118)

Veronica's sense that she is being stalked by some unidentified being that has got into her bungalow gives the reader the sense that she thought it to be some animal or entity, not human, an account which is totally at variance with Sibiya's sexual desires as he approaches her.

Veronica is shocked by what is happening: at first it is almost as if she does not recognize it as really happening, as if it were a dream, a nightmare, though ironically it is Sibiya's dream. Her inability to immediately recognize the danger she is in is supported by the fact that she as a white woman feels “safe and secure” in her bungalow. No ‘native’, to her mind and the minds of others like her, would be stupid enough to attempt what this one seem to be attempting, and thus she remains frightened but calm for the first while. The description of Sibiya staring at her as if she were a piece of meat (118) confirms the reader's perception and Sibiya's own description of himself as being entirely intoxicated by the thought of what he is about to do to Veronica and the metaphorical significance of it. He is thus the proverbial starving poor man relishing every moment of consumption of his first meal in a while; he is the proverbial child in a candy store.

Veronica then notices that “ [...] the native was getting quite excited [...]; his breath was coming out in short gasps as if he had been running a long time” (118). Up until this point she had not been as scared, because she was aware of her power as white woman in Apartheid South Africa. But then as Sibiya is caresses her body she describes herself as being truly terrified for the first time:

My throat felt completely dry. I was very much aware that I was in great danger and this was confirmed to me when the native suddenly became threatening. By this time, he had his hand wedged firmly between my legs. (119)

He is touching the most intimate part of her white body, the ‘forbidden portal’ to her ‘royal hearth’.

When he saw I was about to scream he shoved me down and yelled in my face, 'Don't make a sound, or I'll kill you!' (119)

He had something in his hand which looked like a knife and I was convinced he meant what he said. (119)

This threat is not present in Sibiya’s version of the events described here by Veronica. It is significantly left out of his but included in hers, perhaps to explain why she seems to be so passive when about to be raped by a black man.

I said, 'What do you want?' very frightened by now, and the native just looked at me and grinned. It was a ghastly grin like the grimace of a wild animal and he just kept on touching me, playing with one of my breasts, feeling me up. I'll never forget his eyes. They looked as if they were about to pop out of his head. His throat was moving as if he was finding great difficulty in swallowing. At other times he ran his tongue hungrily over his ashy lips, sort of smacking a bit as if he couldn't believe his luck. (119-120)

Again Sibiya is described by Veronica using animalistic references. The language she is presented as using is meant to stereotypically define her character as a very manipulative racist white woman.

Sibiya, according to Veronica, then began to undress and when she saw this she finally realized what was about to happen and thus started shaking with fear, pleading with him not to rape her but to leave her alone and instead take anything he wanted from her bungalow, but instead of acting like a ‘good native’ and obeying the white madam’s wishes, to Veronica’s “absolute horror”, Sibiya responds to her pleas “by pulling out his huge black thing, sort of rubbing it gleefully with the palm of his hand, getting it ready for action” (120). Veronica’s testimony reveals a well-known racist stereotype: the idea is that

black men have unusually large penises, symbolising their uncontrolled sexual needs. Ironically this is a stereotype that is reiterated by Sibiya himself who mentions the size of his penis a number of times, perhaps an example of what Fanon calls the oppressed taking on the discourse of the oppressor. The sight of his penis froze Veronica's blood and she "must've vomited then" (120). This is, according to her narrative as mediated through Sibiya, an obvious fact; as a white woman how can she not but vomit at the sight of a huge black penis attached to that which had been constructed as other. And like Sibiya and his oversized penis "[e]verything suddenly became completely black!" (120).

According to Sibiya, the 'fact' that Veronica is not trustworthy is something everyone who sits in judgement over him conveniently forgets (18). Instead of viewing Veronica as the wild temptress that he presents her as being, everyone perceives her to be a saint. To them she is simply the unwilling victim of one of the most "despicable sexual crimes" that can be committed (18). Sibiya is of the opinion that should Veronica's filmed history as a "high-class tart" is taken into account by the reader and by his judges, her version of the events would inevitably be seen for what it was: the false, untrustworthy, testimony of an immoral and sexually loose white woman (124). This representation of Veronica helps Sibiya's case with the reader since it brings her actions into question and adds weight to his version of the events. According to him, the court and its spectators who are mostly white, and to some extent even Sibiya's imagined readers, are blinded by his blackness. His is that if one were 'non-racist' one would be able to immediately ascertain that he is innocent and that Veronica is the liar.

When he is asked by his lawyer whether or not he had raped Veronica Sibiya is unable to respond because , according to him he had become so confused about the things that had happened that he does not know not whether his version of the events is the truth or not – yet another that further muddies the waters. However this stance may indicate that he has given up on the thought of a fair trial since he had never expected one and thus he does not see the need for him to tell his story. Sibiya is also defeatist about his version of the truth because it is only Veronica who has the power to validate his story, but she refuses to do so and has now become the enemy, for it is her rebuttal of his version that damns him.

Nevertheless, it was just this girl who could not now be trusted, who had managed to weave a web of fiction so completely divorced from the truth that. Paradoxically, it seemed the more credible for being entirely a work of a diseased fabulist imagination.

[I]t was also the least likely to offend the intelligence of our seasoned judges who yearn for the kind of evidence that fits their prejudices. What

right-thinking judge [...] could believe that, in a country like ours, a white woman in full possession of her senses could take off all her clothes while being observed by a black stranger [...] [and] continue to lie naked and untroubled on the bed while the man, who was no doubt preparing to violate her, stood down gazing at her outstretched body? (129)

Sibiya views the whole trial as an empty ceremony performed by all involved simply so as to maintain the pretence of fairness and justice. It is his opinion that everybody witnessing what is being acted out in court knows that he will be found guilty. This is indicative of how, in Apartheid South Africa, “[t]here is no recourse [for the black man]. The protective institutions of [the society in which he finds himself are not for his benefit]. Police, magistrate, courts - all the apparatus of the law - reinforced the already absolute power of the white *baas* and his madam” (Cole, 21). The black person thus has no hope of being treated fair and justly by the law. It does not matter what story Sibiya tells, no one believes him, it is only Veronica’s version of the events and her framing of it as rape that matters. At first Sibiya constructs their trysts to himself as eventually and inevitably leading to him sexually possessing Veronica, which in turn would afford him the ultimate sense of acknowledgement and acceptance as equal human being that he so desperately craves from white women. Later when she appears in court, and arguably even earlier, although Sibiya was not as aware of it then, Veronica is in control of the situation. He reads her as viewing what had happened between the two of them as a game she had played with a foolish black man who, quite obviously, adored her but she knew could never ‘legally’ sexually possess her. This in turn fed her wayward sexual tendencies and narcissistic nature. Unlike when she was ‘plying her trade’ with her white clients where, assumedly, the man would be in the position of power, when she appears in court she remains in a position of power, which is reinforced by the acceptance of her narrative. Earlier, the fact that their entire relationship was conducted in silence deluded Sibiya into imagining himself as being in a space of dominance since he is the man. However, Sibiya, as the black man in court, is stripped of the power afforded his sex by white patriarchy and by his own blackness whilst Veronica is empowered by her whiteness.

## Chapter six:

### Conclusion

You may think, and quite rightly so in my opinion, that the notoriety attached to this case has come about not so much from the repugnant nature of the crime itself as from its racial undertones. In short, the girl is white and I am black. I cannot possibly disagree with such a just and generous interpretation of the facts, for everyone knows that I am to hang not simply for raping a girl but having slept with a white woman for having aspired, so to speak, to what South African whites imagine is the height of sexual bliss. (27)

*Mating Birds*, even after critical analysis, leaves the reader baffled as to what in actual fact takes place between Veronica and Sibiya. Even though the novel is Sibiya's attempt at finding clarity about what transpired on that important day, one is in the end left with the fact that there are two versions of the events surrounding the rape and that both these narratives are mediated through Sibiya leaving the reader to decide whose version of the truth he or she believes. Sibiya thinks of the crime he is charged with as ridiculous and politically motivated: according to him, what transpired between him and Veronica would not have been seen as 'rape' had it taken place in a country where the laws were different. He presents the 'rape' as if it had in fact not been 'rape'; instead, to him it was willing sexual intercourse between two adults who by chance happened to be of two different races. The pathology that surrounds the events lies neither with Sibiya nor Veronica, but instead with the Apartheid state which influences and shapes social interactions and identities. Their actual crime, according to him, is that they chose to stage their in their sexual rebellion in a country where the oppositeness and separation of the two races to which they belong respectively was defined and furthered by the highest court of law. Therefore, if Sibiya and Veronica met in a country where it was legal for them to have interracial sex they would have been able to enact the normal rituals of courtship. Further, if it were not for his identity as a racial inferior, Sibiya would not have obsessed about attaining what the state defines as his racial superior. In such a situation, Veronica would not have been forced to lie if she did and accuse him of rape, for their sexual interaction would have been accepted as normal and she would not have needed to save herself from the public shame that came with being associated sexually with a black man in a racist state.

There are two major themes that form the basis of Sibiya's narrative as presented in *Mating Birds*. One of these is the issue of western education and through it the whole process of Westernization. As illustrated by the Fanonian inspired, post-colonial psychoanalytical reading that precedes this

conclusion, the black subject, through his or her engagement with and socialization into racist, western attitudes that are both insidious and explicit, becomes indoctrinated into a sense of inferiority that suggest to him or her that s/he is not worthy of being the white man's equal. This internalized sense of inferiority, in the specific case of the Fanonian subject, causes him to be engaged in a constant internal struggle against white dominance by desperately trying to his intellect and worth. It is perpetuated by the dominant colonial discourse that is used in the colonial space, and reiterated through the black person's exposure to western education and the use of colonial language which associates blackness with darkness, and in turn connotes negativity and evil.

As a black child, Sibiya grew up in a social space where white was constructed as innately superior on all levels and black as innately inferior. Through the process of western education as well as his experiences as a black child growing up in Apartheid South Africa, he, in Fanonian terms, starts to view his state of inferiority as something which he has unconsciously interiorised as well as a white racist construct that is projected onto him. It is only when he is confronted by Prof. Van Niekerk, who teaches him a history of Africa similar to the history he had been taught in school - (a history that denies all aspects of African society and history) - that Sibiya is motivated to discover a history that, instead of entirely denying his blackness affirms it. This realization that almost all he had been taught about himself and his people had been a lie empowers Sibiya to teach himself a history that affirms his African, and he becomes determined to possess all that he has been denied by his white masters. Because he is a black man trapped in the constructed state of inferiority, signalled and determined by his black skin, he is aware of the fact that demanding equal rights and treatment under the law within the South African context at the time would lead to swift retribution from the dominant white society. As an alternative Sibiya fixates on white women as constructs that embody the white space, with its privileged position in society, and he becomes obsessed with that which has been placed outside of his reach.

Sibiya's fixation on the white woman as a socio-economic and political object is arguably a predisposition to become obsessed with white women. This obsession, within the Fanonian model, is viewed as stemming from and being a direct consequence of the pathology inherent in the oppressive racist state. *Mating Birds*, viewed in this light is thus not a novel about interracial sex/rape or even love across the colour line; instead it is Lewis Nkosi's attempt at presenting the manner in which Apartheid was so insidious in the way it affected people and their social interactions that even the most primal and 'simplest' of social interactions become tainted, and thus unnatural and pathological.

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